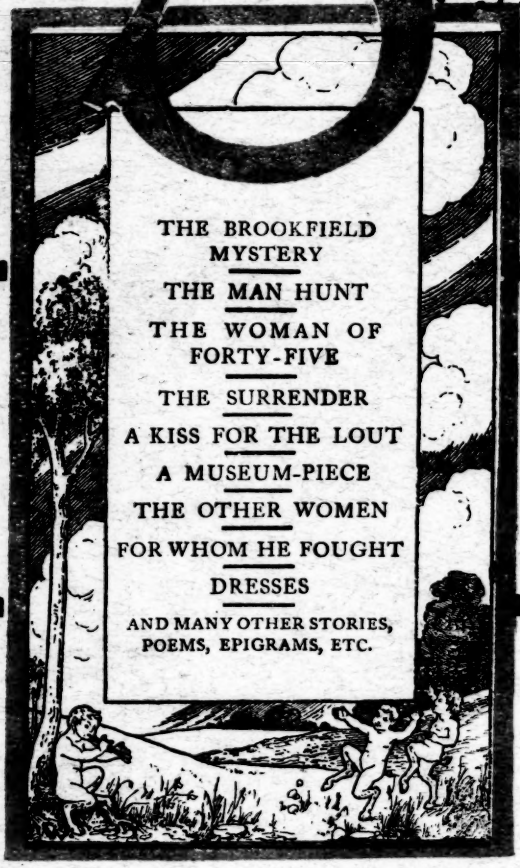
THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse, Not to Instruct



THE BROOKFIELD MYSTERY

THE MAN HUNT

THE WOMAN OF FORTY-FIVE

THE SURRENDER

A KISS FOR THE LOUT

A MUSEUM-PIECE

THE OTHER WOMEN

FOR WHOM HE FOUGHT

DRESSES

AND MANY OTHER STORIES, POEMS, EPIGRAMS, ETC.

JUNE 1919

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

JUNE, 1919

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FIG LEAVES.

By H. DENNIS BRADLEY.

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AFTER the first sunny days in the Garden of Eden, when the beautiful and un-English climate necessitated the donning of a fig leaf merely as a concession to the dawning of modesty, it is safe to assume that primitive man adopted clothes as a protection against the elements.

So long as his peculiar garments kept him warm, and gave his arms free play to slay the interfering ichthyosaurus and the too inquisitive mastodon, which were ravishing his larder out of sheer exuberance of spirits, he would not seem to have spent many sleepless hours of the night in evolving a new thing in two-toed sloth skins.

His clothes were for business purposes only, and life was pretty strenuous; so, as far as he was concerned, he scorned the waste of a dinner-hour in thinking out new styles; he was out for business, with his club—business neither pure nor particularly simple.

And despite the assumed culture of this twentieth century it is a moot point whether in manners, mackintoshes or morals, civilisation has advanced much since the days of the cave-dweller.

And for an astonishingly long period from age to age, from century to century—it has crystallised into a sort of tradition—the idea persisted that the man in pursuit of his meat ration, his bread and margarine and his sugar, need only to adopt a shapeless, supposedly utilitarian and inevitably ugly form of covering for his nakedness.

* * * * *

Since the era of fig leaves and woad there have, of course, been happy lapses from that code of ugliness and utilitarianism, and at different periods man has realised that though money making and life may at times be sordid businesses at the best, there is no occasion to dress sordidly.

When fig leaves became bad form and clothes were accepted as part of the scheme of life—things to live in and live with—the more truculent or virile spirits attempted to control their surroundings. The soldier proceeded to clothe himself in scarlet and gold, the courtier invested himself in gay silks and satins and stuck a feather in his hat; even a poor writing-man had his sartorial conscience, and a Goldsmith prided himself on the colour of his coat.

* * * * *

But the tradition persisted, in spite of brilliant rebellions: the Albertian age gave it a *cachet* which seemed likely to render it immortal.

Then war came, and, as an aftermath, revolutions of ideas and ruthless criticism of traditions.

If clothes are necessary—and the fashions of the *revue* ladies occasionally suggest a doubt—let us see that men's clothes are not needlessly and traditionally ugly.

* * * * *

The prices charged by Pope and Bradley are high, but the Government for a long time controlled wool. When the Government controls anything the ordinary business man finds it difficult to control his temper. But probably in primeval wars indifferent fig leaves were rationed at an exorbitant figure; at any rate, we know Adam's apple cost a hell of a price. Lounge Suits from £9 9s. Dinner Suits from £12 12s. Overcoats from £10 10s.

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1919.

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March 24	**All Alone**	5 W 4/1	20	0 0 ...
27	**Marcia Blanche.**	5 L	...	...5
28	**Rossini**	7 W 9/2	31	10 0 ...
31	**Cage**	5 L	...	...5
April 2	**Drumlanrig**	7 W 10/1	70	0 0 ...
3	**Barocco**	5 L	...	...5
4	**Pretty Girl**	7 W 10/1	70	0 0 ...
5	**Pretty Missie**	5 L	...	...5
7	**Mdlle. Foch**	7 W 10/11	6	7 2 ...
9	**Little Vic**	5 L	...	...5
11	**Little Vic**	7 L	...	...7
12	**Callander**	10 W 4/1	40	0 0 ...
15	**D.N.P.**	5 L	...	...5
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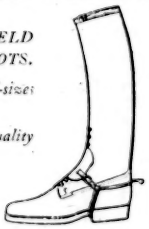

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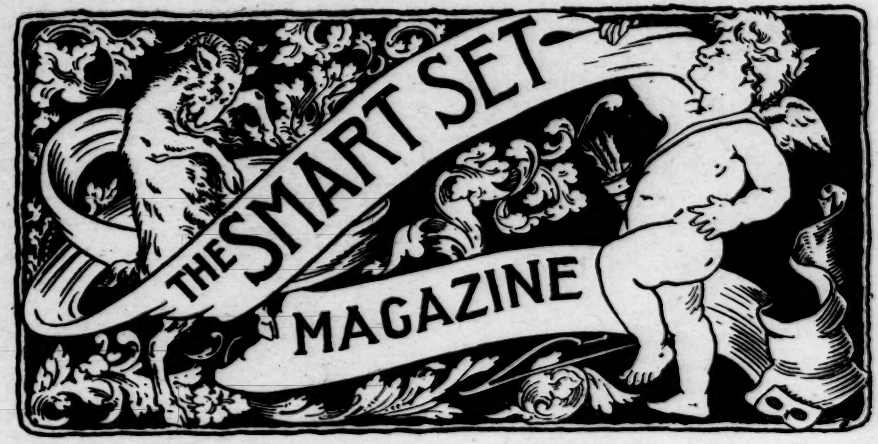

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THE BROOKFIELD MYSTERY

By Charles Stokes Wayne

CHAPTER I

THERE is a proverb, of Dutch origin, to this effect: "Talk of the devil and he'll either send or come." It has as many versions as there are tongues. Hence, what happened that May night, out Morristown way, has proverbial authority, and is not to be classed under the head of coincidence.

The devil in the case was Brookfield. He was big enough, socially and financially, to have been a topic of conversation anywhere, seeing that a week rarely passed without his name appearing in the newspapers in one connection or another. But that he should have cropped up in the table-talk at the Burnham dinner was as natural as that brook trout should be served. They were all—host, hostess, and guests—more or less of the same set in which the Brookfields so elegantly—and in his own particular case, so conspicuously—flowered.

Yet, his mention—the mere injection his name—was, indeed, most casual. The Chelmsfords, a young English couple, who had come to New York, well introduced, the preceding autumn, had let drop the fact that they were looking for a suburban place for the summer. Whereupon Van Ness volunteered that Brookfield might be persuaded to let his property on the Raritan—a charming spot, not far from Somerville.

It was not until later, though, that he was really talked of. Possibly the Chelmsfords may have talked of him, between themselves, and there is no telling how the women may have grilled him during the temporary male absence following the dinner. But it was Nicholas Van Ness and Henry Burnham who were—if there be anything in proverbs—most to blame, probably, for calling forth that fulfilment.

The Burnhams were ostensibly of the all-year-round Morristown of hospitals, invalids, and bracing climate, since Burnham was an uncommonly skilled and successful physician with a large and highly remunerative practice, a consulting room in the town and a villa of no little pretension on a side of

one of the surrounding hills. Only ostensibly, however, for the reason that his wife and eldest daughter invariably went to New York for the season, retaining for that purpose a Park Avenue apartment. And even Burnham, himself, deserted every summer for a month of salmon fishing in Maine.

He was a rather dapper little chap, all bone and sinew, with pale mouse-coloured hair that had once been a pallid flaxen, and the lightest, yet sharpest of blue eyes. No one had ever guessed within five years of his age. The majority thought him about forty, though his daughter—Annette, the eldest—was nearly nineteen. Actually, he was fifty-one.

Nick Van Ness looked the older, and was but forty-three. His hair had been nearly snow-white since he was thirty, and now it was getting thinner and thinner on the crown. He had shrewdly discerning grey eyes that were yet capable of a diversity of expressions, and a jutting, dominating chin. Most women thought him handsome. He was tall, with broad but not too square shoulders, slender-waisted and lean-flanked, and appeared to best advantage in evening clothes. There was no more distinguished corporation lawyer than he at the New York Bar. For eight years he had been a childless widower, striving to bring up a niece—his dead sister's daughter and a débutante of last season—in the way she should go.

And he was having his own troubles.

When the other dinner guests had gone their ways, Van Ness, who was stopping over night, lingered with Burnham on the terrace for a final cigar, but more especially for consultation. For Burnham had had paternal experience. And the very first word Van Ness uttered, just as if there had been no hiatus between the moment of his suggestion to the Chelmsfords and this one, was "Brookfield!"

He said it ruminatively, as though it had lingered with him all that while, and was now to be chewed over again. He said it and paused, bent forward a bit in his cane-chair, his elbow resting on the arm of it, and his hand gripping his smooth-shaved jutting chin.

Burnham, with whom the lighting of a cigar resembled somewhat a religious ceremony always performed in the same manner, a rite involving the production of a penknife, the amputation of the point by a double cut, the return of the penknife to his pocket, all precedent to the striking of the match, was at the moment in the act of applying the flame and drawing in the first breath of generated smoke.

Not until he had emitted this and examined the cigar-end to make sure that it was burning evenly, did Van Ness say more.

"Brookfield!" he repeated in the same tone. "Was there ever another just like him?"

"I dare say not," Burnham answered, settling low in his chair, now that the cigar was satisfactorily alight and drawing well. "Nature rarely duplicates exactly in man, though we all may be classified. What do you think, yourself? You know him far better than I do."

"I'm not sure that I ever shall know him. That's the point. One can generalize, of course. Call him a perpetual contradiction; an anomalous combination; a fellow made up of good and bad. But such generalities are so infernally inadequate. They're only the old dual personality thing over again. And, of late, I've about concluded that Brookfield's personality is no more dual than yours or mine."

"I see. No more disintegrated, you mean."

"Yes. When he seems most at variance, he's still true to type. All three of the attributes of personality—consciousness, character and will—combine in him to one end. And that end is personal gratification. Over and above everything, yet including everything, he's a sensualist."

"I've heard stories, of course," returned the doctor.

"Naturally. And yet, in personal contact, how disarming he is! In that lies his power for evil. Apparently, there

is no more faithful and devoted husband living than Brookfield. I've heard him called uxorious."

"Unusual, yes. Very. But not unique. A *lusus naturæ*, rather."

Van Ness bit hard on his cigar. "Which makes him all the more difficult to deal with. His magnetism is terrific. To be with him, means that he'll get you, every time. Away from him, you may hate, loathe him. But, once under the spell of his presence, you don't exactly forget, you just can't believe. Black becomes white. And, if he has that effect on me, what must be his power with a woman?"

"Are you trying to excuse—*some* woman?" asked Burnham quietly, his gaze lifted to the purple, star-flecked heavens.

May had borrowed the night from June. It was warm and breathless.

At intervals there came to them, low but ominous, the echo of distant thunder.

A long moment passed before the little physician received his waited answer.

"I am praying God that I may not have to," was the way, tardily, that Van Ness put it.

Whatever Burnham may have interpreted that to mean, his next observation gave no hint of it.

"And—Mrs. Brookfield," he said, harking back to that "uxorious" of his friend, "is she conscious of her husband's derelictions?"

"That puzzles me. Sometimes, I have thought she was. At others, I am almost certain that she isn't. But, then, she's wonderful. No matter how assured she was, she'd never let the world know. There's that much of the Spartan in her."

"What a beautiful creature she is!"

"Isn't she?" Van Ness was almost enthusiastic. "And to think he merely pretends appreciation."

"But can you be sure of that? Men are differently constituted, as, of course, you know."

"If he appreciated her as she deserves he couldn't be the beast he is," Van Ness maintained, warmly. "For all his magnetism, he's conscienceless."

"It's a pity they haven't children. That might— Let me see! How long have they been married?"

"Nearly five years. He's thirty-eight, and Camilla was twenty on her wedding day. You knew her as a girl, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes. But I can't keep track of time, any more."

The spirit of the conversation slackened. They became reminiscent. But, presently, Burnham said:

"So they'll not be at the Somerville place, this year?"

"I understand not. Too near town, I fancy, for Brookfield's purposes. He's taken a place in the Berkshires to hide Camilla away in, until Newport comes to life."

"You're to go to them, I suppose?"

"Possibly. There's been no time set. But Hilda's asked for all June. Camilla's very fond of my elfin ward, you know."

"Ah! Yes. I remember. She's about Annette's age. Much admired, I assume."

Van Ness held up both hands. "She's had six proposals and out only one season."

"And accepted none?"

"None. She bewitches them. Young and old alike, and considers it great fun. Even old Fetherly's been in the running, and he was philandering when I was a boy."

The storm broke before their cigars were finished, and drove them to the library, which, like the terrace, they had to themselves. And, though here the conversation veered to books, once more Brookfield came into it.

Burnham, who was something of a bibliophile, produced for his friend's inspection a newly-acquired and highly-prized old volume, dated 1633, entitled "The Purple Island: or the Isle of Man."

"Do you know it?" he asked, his light blue eyes twinkling. "By Phineas Fletcher. Most interesting, too. The island, you see, is the human body,

fairly accurately described in not at all bad verse."

He began to turn the pages.

"Look at this. The poet adopted the Platonic idea of love—or affection, rather—abiding in the liver. But he qualifies it. Ah, here it is! Listen:

"'*Within, some say, Love hath his habitation;*
Not Cupid's self, but Cupid's better brother;
For Cupid's self dwells with a lower nation.
But this, more sure, much chaster than the other.'

How about that accounting for the two sides of Brookfield?"

And it was just at that moment that the telephone rang so stridently as to discourage Van Ness from attempting to answer. Burnham, putting the book into his hands, turned to the table by which they had been standing and took up the instrument.

To listen was neither the visitor's desire nor intention. He bent his eyes on "The Purple Island," but there was that in the feverishly quick staccato of his host's responses and questions which, after the first few seconds, compelled his interest.

There was no mistaking the vital urgency of the communication, whatever the cause. To Van Ness, the bits he got of it, sounded tragic. His first imagining was the lightning. Someone had been "struck." Then, a motor smash-up. But it was neither.

With an "I'll be there in ten minutes" Burnham had hung up and turned to him a grave visage.

"That's damned singular," he said, frowning, "coming at the very moment I spoke his name. He's been shot. Over at Labiche's. You know that little inn, don't you, kept by the Frenchman? A woman, they say, of course. He's alive. Asked that I be sent for. Come, Van! You'll go with me, won't you?"

So, there you are. "Talk of the devil and he'll either send or come." Brookfield had sent.

CHAPTER II

Van Ness did know Labiche's. Or, rather, he knew of it. It was out towards Whippany—on the Whippany River, in fact—and many times he had passed its gates, driving, but never entered. It was at once famous, and, if not exactly infamous, at least notorious. There was nothing too good to say of its cuisinerie, and but little too bad to say of its licence. From the road the inn was not visible, being completely hidden by a dense grove of oaks and chestnuts, and approached by a long and winding driveway. Nor was there any sign displayed either on the tall stone gate posts, to guide the uninitiate, or upon the inn when reached to confirm his conjecture should he penetrate that far. Not only had Labiche no need of such adventitious aids to a business so long and well established, but to do without them was infinitely safer. He had his own clientèle, which, for the sake of self-preservation, could be depended upon to be discreet.

Burnham's chauffeur, impressed with the life-or-death necessity for speed, had got out of the big closed car everything, to the last notch, it was capable of. And they had flashed through the night and the storm as a dry leaf before a gale, and nearly come to grief in consequence.

Lightning, at the instant, revealed that other car as it slipped past without an inch to spare, and the little doctor started, breaking a tense silence, to swear a good round oath and to invoke curses on the heads of reckless daredevils in general and those in that car of Juggernaut in particular.

"Women!" he cried. "Damn them! Three. Did you see? Going like hell. And their lights out."

But Van Ness hadn't seen. He was sitting on Burnham's right, with his eyes closed, thinking. Ethics! That was his subject. Wasn't there something wrong, somewhere? Here they were nearly breaking their necks—risking their lives, perhaps—to save a life that— Was it worth saving? Ah, that

was the point, of course! How are we, fallible creatures, all of us, to judge? For his own part, he was prejudiced. He must admit that. If Brookfield should die his own problems would be solved. Certainly one of them, and probably both. But he'd be the last to wish him left unaided for that reason. That would be criminal. And yet—And, right here, Burnham's start and sudden profanity had caught him up, bringing his thought home. But for the grace of God they might now be dead as meat, while the other survived.

It had lacked five minutes of midnight when Burnham said over the telephone: "I'll be there in ten minutes." And by the same watch it was four minutes after as his motor-car skidded to a stop on the rain-soaked, rivuleted driveway, before the steps leading up to the veranda.

Labiche, himself, stood in the open doorway. He was the type of Frenchman known as the Iberio-Celtic, low of stature, square-shouldered, and short-headed, with dark hair and eyes. He was, indeed, almost the exact counterpart of a groom that had been in Van Ness's service, who came from the Department of Basses Pyrenées, not far from Pau. There was something grim about his expression and his eyes were furtive. He was wearing a not-too-well-brushed suit of blue serge.

"Ah, *M'sieur le Docteur!* So kveek! Zat is *très bon.* But I have ze great fear. Ze m'sieur ees *inconscient.* He no speek some more. If he breat' eet ees so leetle I cannot detec'."

He spoke hurriedly, excitedly, with many gestures, ending with a beckoning finger and moving off hurriedly across the dimly lighted entrance hall, and down a passage to the right beneath a curving stairway.

Burnham followed without a word, and Van Ness trailed at a little distance behind him. To the latter the atmosphere of this interior was oppressively lugubrious. He had expected something very different. Something garish, in fact. But even in the scant illumination he could see that it was shabby, dusty, colourless. The air was fœtid, too, with stale odours of cooking and of soured wines and cigarette-smoke. The effect, certainly, was one of evil, but by no means of an alluring evil.

The room into which Labiche led them was better lighted. Two electric lamps blazed overhead beneath shades of red tissue-paper, imparting to ceiling and upper walls a rufous glow. But the furniture was cheap and tawdry. A small, circular dining table, with the cloth still upon it, but from which all else had been removed, stood in one corner; probably pushed back there from the room's centre. Facing the door by which they entered were two windows, evidently closed, as their long, faded, red-rep curtains were drawn across them, and the room was as hot as Tophet. A door, half open, in the middle of the left wall indicated an adjoining apartment, now in darkness.

Van Ness observed it, noting its significance, as he turned with the others to where, on that side of the entrance, the long, familiar figure of Brookfield lay stretched on a crimson-plush-covered lounge, his left arm depending over the side, and the hand resting on the floor, palm-upward. His coat had been removed, his waistcoat was open and fallen back, and his collar and neckband unbuttoned.

To all appearance, he lay there sleeping. There was apparently no blood, no bleeding. And it struck Van Ness that there must be some mistake. He had been hurt, undoubtedly, though he didn't look it, the handsome, big beast, with colour still in his cheeks, his lips slightly parted beneath his silky brown moustache, and only a single glossy lock of his black hair sufficiently disarranged as to fall over his white, unfurrowed brow. If one didn't know—hadn't heard, that is—it might naturally be assumed that Carey Brookfield, warm, and perhaps a little tired, had simply made himself comfortable and thrown himself down there to doze after a too hearty and too intemperate dinner.

But Burnham was the last man to be

so deceived. He lifted the right arm, which lay partly along the recumbent figure's side and partly resting on its thigh. There was blood enough there, at the waist. Clots of it, congealed, and darkening; staining, as with ink, the pale grey of the fine worsted waistcoat and trousers, and stiffening the soft fabric of the coral-pink shirt. Only for a moment he lifted it, and then placed the arm back where it had been, and kneeling down pressed his ear to the spot where the breast bulged on the left side, and so ready for him because of that depending left arm.

It was not, though, until from the pocket of his raincoat he had produced his stethoscope and confirmed the ear's unaided testimony that he spoke, standing up and exposing his palms in token of their inutility.

"I am too late," he said simply.

And the words were addressed more to his friend than to the anxiously waiting and alarmed inn-keeper, who immediately seized the arm of the doctor that was nearest to him, and in a veritable torrent of French and broken English, pleaded hysterically to be spared the ruin which publicity would involve.

"But, my dear man," Burnham edged in when he could. "You are asking the impossible. A crime has been committed which demands investigation, and publicity is inescapable."

Labiche was starting afresh, but Van Ness, who did not have that prognathous chin for nothing, silenced him.

"Enough of that," he shouted. "Not another word, or I'll telephone for the police instantly. Calm yourself, and answer questions. Who did it?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" cried the Frenchman. "Who can say? No one see. No one, M'sieur. I hear ze shoot, but I zink him—What you say?—Ze blow-out. Paul, who serve M'sieur, he zink like me. We bot' zink him ze blow-out."

"Was no one here in the room with him?"

Labiche lifted his square shoulders, and grimaced. "Only ze ladee."

"Then there *was* a lady?"

"*Certainement, M'sieur.*" It went without saying.

"And where is she now?"

Once again the Frenchman shrugged. She was gone, of course. She was gone when Paul entered with the champagne to see the M'sieur sitting on the lounge, bent over, and his face distorted with pain.

By dint of much more questioning and cross-questioning, Van Ness got at least the skeleton of the facts, while Burnham stood silently by and listened, and the horridly still thing, which such a little while before had been the chief actor in the drama narrated, grew by degrees colder and colder, and gradually rigid, under their eyes.

Labiche had known Brookfield for several years, but never by that name. To the Frenchman he had always been "M'sieur Ca-ree." He was a frequent and generous patron. Always it was a late dinner or an early supper, ordered by telephone in advance; and always—except, as sometimes but rarely happened, it was not available—this suite. The guests of M'sieur, however, were varied. Seldom did the same "ladee" accompany him more than once. The "ladee" of to-night was a stranger. Not only was the inn-keeper quite sure that he had never seen her before, but, even this night, he had seen her for but a moment. For these reasons it was difficult to describe her. She was young, she was beautiful, *charmante, ravissante.* But whether *blonde* or *brune* he could not say. Nor was the waiter, Paul, any more certain.

The supper had been ordered for eleven. But M'sieur had not been punctual. It was half an hour later when it was served. Very soon after that the bell from the suite had rung and rung. But both Labiche and Paul were otherwise engaged at the moment, and there had been some delay in answering it. When, eventually, Paul was about to respond, M'sieur Ca-ree presented himself in the kitchen, champagne bottle in hand.

The champagne, he complained, was

not properly iced. He desired it *frappé*. He remained for some minutes, until he saw the work under way: a fresh bottle in the cooler, with ice and salt, and Paul vigorously twirling it, the neck between his palms.

It was in this way that Paul was engaged when the shot echoed: the shot that was mistaken for a "blow-out." It may have been five minutes—possibly ten—when Paul, tapping on the door, heard a muttered permission to enter, and went in to discover M'sieur Ca-ree wounded and his companion flown.

The waiter had at once summoned his employer, who hastened to the room; and, as together, they were assisting M'sieur to lie down, M'sieur had told Labiche that his name was Brookfield, and had instructed him to summon Dr. Burnham, from Morristown. Labiche had obeyed instantly. More than that, he had sent out all his available employés to search the grounds for the "ladee," and had suggested to the only two other patrons of the inn at the time the advisability of speedy departure.

Such, in brief, was the Frenchman's statement, corroborated by the waiter, Paul, as to incidents within his knowledge.

At its conclusion Van Ness turned to his friend.

"A pretty thing, isn't it?" he said. "Yet I'm not surprised. Something of the kind was almost sure to happen, sooner or later. It was coming to him. My only anxiety is Camilla."

"She must be told at once," Burnham declared.

"Of course. But I've been thinking." He paused, looked about, and seeing Labiche still standing there, addressed him: "Do you mind leaving us here for a little?"

The squat proprietor bowed. "*Mais, non*," he said. "If, perhaps, M'sieur can find ze way to—"

"Very well," Van Ness interrupted. "If I can."

When Labiche had gone he said: "It wouldn't be the first time such a tragedy has been hushed up. And what is to be gained by publicity? I daresay the woman, whoever she was, was within her rights."

"We can't be sure of that, though. The law demands—"

"More than it's entitled to, often. And I'm a member of the Bar. However, that can be decided later. At present we have the wife to consider. Does she know? That is the question."

"Whether he was given to this sort of thing, you mean?"

"Yes. If I could be sure of it, I'd bring her here to see. It would be the best medicine."

"Wouldn't it be the best medicine either way?" asked Burnham. "And I'm a physician. A deceived wife, widowed, who goes through the rest of her life worshipping the memory of a libertine husband, is a pitiful object at best."

Van Ness pursed his lips and stood silent for a moment. Then:

"If she has never suspected, it will be a knock-out."

"Say, rather, an anæsthetic. For, sooner or later, she might learn and suffer. Better have it done and over with."

"I believe you're right, Henry," Van Ness concluded. "I'll get her by telephone at once."

But he had only his effort for his pains. He tried for twenty minutes, and the end was like the beginning. "Don't answer."

Then he got the telegraph office at Morristown, and dictated a message which he directed should be marked: "Rush. Urgent." It read:

"*Carey seriously ill here. Come by first train. I will meet you at Morristown station.*"

And it was signed: "*Nick.*"

CHAPTER III

On returning to the room he found that Burnham had not been idle during his absence. For one thing he had obtained a sheet from the adjoining bedchamber and the body of the murdered Brookfield no longer lay exposed to the revealing glare of those overhead elec-

tric lamps. But the little medical man had not stopped at this. He had made a search for objects, however small and apparently insignificant, that might be possible clues to the perpetrator of the crime. And it had not been by any means futile. He had found something, indeed, which he regarded as very much worth while, and far beyond what he had any reason to expect.

He had removed his raincoat for the task, and as Van Ness entered he drew his find from a pocket of his dress trousers.

"Look!" he said, with something of pride in his tone. "It was lying on the floor just under the edge of the dressing-table in the next room."

It was a gold vanity case, ornamented with a number of small rubies and diamonds.

Van Ness took it from his hand and examined it carefully, both outside and in. And, though there was nothing about it, really, to distinguish it from hundreds of others—no initial, monogram, crest, or other device—it did, nevertheless, at first glance, impress him as in a way familiar. He felt that he had seen it before. Or, if not it, one very similar. And as he turned it over and over, opened it and closed it, he was all the while striving to remember where.

But he was not a man who was particularly observant of women's clothes or their jewels, and he ended by deciding that he had probably been mistaken.

"That was all?" he asked.

To which Burnham, taken aback by this apparent lack of appreciation, retorted:

"Nothing short of the woman's photograph would satisfy you, I assume." But Van Ness rejoined with:

"To be quite frank, Henry, that's just what I shouldn't care to see. I might recognize it and my duty would compel prosecution. It's only in not knowing that we would be justified in hushing the matter up. You don't think, by any chance, Labiche, himself, or that fellow Paul could have done it?"

But, without waiting for an answer, he went on:

"No, that is not conceivable. Labiche would never have sent for you if they had, either of them. And the woman wouldn't have run away. She had a hot storm to run in, by the way."

"Yes," Burnham agreed. "That's the most puzzling feature. Fancy her out in that, soaked to the skin, and no convenient train or even a trolley."

"The chances are they came by motor. In his own motor, driven by himself, in all probability. She might have gone in that."

"But she didn't. I asked Labiche, while you were telephoning. He says it's still in his garage."

"Then at this very minute she must be wandering about, or possibly hiding somewhere until dawn. To tell the truth, I'm sorry for her. It may not be right, but I can't help it. She was plucky, and pluck is always admirable."

"Still," said Burnham, "it's Mrs. Brookfield that must be considered after all. I think this might be kept quiet. It's been done before, as you say. And I have some authority out this way. I could do it. And I would for her sake."

"How?"

"Take the body over to my place. Call it apoplexy. Give a certificate to that effect."

"But, wouldn't the undertaker—?"

"Not the one I'd employ."

"I see. You have affairs out this way in the hollow of your hand. But the removal should be made at once. And I'm opposed to that. For the tragedy to have the effect on Camilla we both deem advisable she must find him here; and I understand there's no train out of New York until four o'clock. That means six at Morristown. Broad daylight. I'm afraid it can't be done."

"You watch me," said Burnham.

Before leaving the inn they impressed upon Labiche—for his own sake, since he so desired secrecy—the importance of complete concealment. Could he be responsible for his employés? Wouldn't the itch to talk be

too much for them? No one but Paul, he said, really knew. And Paul was "of a grand taciturnity."

Van Ness made a pretence of going to bed in the biggest of the Burnham guest chambers. But he never more than dozed. The event of the night and the promise of the morning crowded out sleep. His mind was endlessly engaged with them, and again and again the seeming familiarity of that vanity case, which he had retained, recurred to him. Yet with nothing nearer to a solution than in the moment when first he saw it.

Before five he was in his bath, and he was shaved and dressed by twenty after. Going downstairs, he found Burnham there ahead of him. Not another soul—no one of the servants even—was yet astir. But the doctor, himself, had prepared coffee.

There were two runabouts in the garage, in addition to the big car used the night before, and it was arranged that while Van Ness employed one of these to fetch Mrs. Brookfield, Burnham should go ahead to Labiche's in the other. The morning was fine after the storm, but the roads were somewhat torn, and in spots soggy.

Not until he stood waiting on the platform at the railroad station did it once occur to Van Ness that Camilla might not come. He had not expected a reply to his telegram. It was hardly likely, in the stress of her emotion, Camilla would so much as think of responding. But the point was: Had his message reached her? Or, if so, had it reached her in time. Still, in spite of his failure to get anyone at the house by telephone, he could hardly believe that the town residence was entirely vacated. The Brookfields, as he so well knew, were not occupying the Somerville property this spring, and were not contemplating removal to the Berkshires until next month. Yet Camilla might have gone to anyone of a score of friends with country houses. And even the best servants had, apparently, a marvellous capacity for stupidity at times.

But in the midst of his misgivings Camilla arrived. She was among the first off the train, and he spotted her instantly, and dashed to her. His precipitancy, indeed, seemed rather to stun her. She gasped, and stood open-mouthed, her perfect short upper lip baring her equally perfect, small, white and even teeth.

She was within half a head of being as tall as himself, and there was no line of her figure that was not visibly, through her dark blue travelling suit, a line of beauty. He saw at once that she was unusually pale, and her long-lashed lids drooping a bit over those usually lustrous brown eyes, now almost lustreless, indicated, he thought, mental suffering, rather than weariness.

He caught her gloved right hand in both of his own, with a warm, friendly pressure, meant to stay her, as he said:

"You did get my wire, then. I was so afraid you hadn't."

To this she nodded, and his hand-clasp seemed to have done its work. She appeared less numbed, less blunted.

He led her away, out of the little cluster of persons to where the runabout waited, before saying more. And then it was she who invited, with:

"Is it good or bad news you have for me?"

And he answered, his eyes fixed on hers: "In one way it couldn't be worse. Yet, in another—"

But she did not permit him to finish.

"You mean he's dead," she put it straight.

Nothing more was said by either until they were in the car and free of the town, when she asked simply:

"Where are you taking me?" And, somehow, he was impressed that she had forced herself to make the enquiry.

"To him," he told her. "I want you to see where and how he—met death."

When they reached Labiche's, Burnham, hat in hand, came down the steps to the car. He bowed, solemnly, to Mrs. Brookfield, and, as Van Ness alighted from the far side, and ran 'round to assist her, Burnham intercepted him to whisper:

"The town police are here. Our plan's smashed. They're in the room now. You'll have to wait a bit."

CHAPTER IV

THE presence of the police, of course, complicated matters very materially. It meant that there would be what is called "a rigid investigation." The coroner, to begin with, would hold an inquest, and his jury would determine how Carey Brookfield came to his death, and, if possible, at whose hands. But, while the "how" was already apparent, the "at whose hands" was very deeply veiled in mystery, and it would require, probably, not only the most painstaking, but the most cunning endeavours of detectives to penetrate that veil. Moreover, a pandering press, always avid for sensational tidbits from the heart of the so-called *noblesse*, would devote columns to the daily developments.

Whatever power or influence Dr. Henry Burnham possessed to throttle the facts before birth, he was devoid of once it had emerged from secrecy's womb. And Van Ness, realizing the opportunity missed, and, as not until now, all that the hideous bearing of ugly truth involved, not to speak of the added horrors of speculation and innuendo, regretted to his soul's depths his insistence on delaying the removal of the body until Camilla could get the effect as he, himself, had got it.

It was all very well for Burnham to endeavour to allay his self-reproach by arguing that since it was Paul, of the "grand taciturnity," who had let the cat out of the bag, it must have happened, whether or no. But Burnham knew as well as he that the word of a poor, ignorant French waiter would never have stood against that of so prominent and respected a townsman as the physician, had he chosen to raise the issue. After the discovery of the body and the pistol-shot wound in the side, however, there was no going back of the returns. The evidence stood for itself.

So, after all, the sinister aspect of the resort, on which he had counted so much for what Burnham had called its "anæsthetic" effect was of small moment, compared with the bigger and more smashing things brought out later. For there was very little in Carey Brookfield's life, no matter how well he had guarded it, which did not become public property at that time.

And at Labiche's, that morning, Camilla had ended by declining to go to the room where her husband's body lay. First and last she had been accorded no privacy. On the contrary. For the coroner, arriving a few minutes after she and Van Ness, had actually seized the opportunity to question her, and had gone so far as to ask if she knew of any women—he thought she might be jealous—that her husband would have been likely to bring to such a resort as this. Adding: "You know, I suppose, it's a—brothel, a place of assignation."

It was coarse, heartless, unpardonable, and Van Ness resented it. To gather all the information possible was, he knew, in the official's line of duty. But he blamed him for the brutal way in which he put the question and made the revelation.

Yet, at the same time, he had this very brutality to thank for setting his own doubts at rest on one point. For Camilla's reception of it—her almost stolid imperturbability, even more than her monosyllabic negative to the query and her simple nod to the concluding assumption—dissipated his last lingering uncertainty as to whether or not she had all along been conscious of Carey's grosser, carnal side, and the divers gallantries it involved.

Shocked, stunned indeed, she unquestionably was. But it was clearly apparent—had been from the moment of their meeting at the station—that she was not greatly surprised. He had softened his ugly tidings as best he could, and she had made the softening less difficult by a ready understanding and a marked abstention from asking questions. These things had argued

foreknowledge of her husband's habits, but it had required the incident with the coroner to supply the ultimate confirmation.

So far as the effort to find the malefactress went, the authorities were quite baffled. Never, probably, was there a case with fewer clues. For, determined from the first to do all in their power to minimize the scandal as far as possible for Camilla's sake, Van Ness and Burnham had made no mention of the vanity case which still remained in the possession of the former. And beyond that there was practically nothing to serve as a guide to the guilty one. No weapon had been found. The autopsy had revealed that death was caused by a bullet of .38 calibre, fired probably from an automatic; which was hardly of importance, in the absence of such a pistol. And whatever might have been gained by the identification of footprints in the neighbourhood of the inn was lost by reason of the heavy rain at the time making even the detection of footprints impossible.

Thus it happened that, after dragging a score or more of women into very questionable and embarrassing publicity—women of nearly all grades, from those of fashion and those of the higher half-world to stenographers, manicurists, and telephone operators—a much delayed verdict was finally rendered to the effect that Brookfield came to his death "at the hands of a person or persons unknown."

Meanwhile, however, Nick Van Ness, with no desire whatever to find a culprit, was to be tortured by having suspicion piled on suspicion until he was well-nigh appalled by the pointing of the finger thus conjured.

CHAPTER V

RETURNING to town with Camilla on the afternoon of that day of her visit to Labiche's, he noted a change in her. There, throughout her trying ordeal, he had marvelled at her self-possession, her almost perfect calm in the face of everything. Not once had she lost her poise. But on the train she was visibly ill at ease. This he attributed, naturally, to the reaction. Alone with him, surrounded as they were by strangers, the strain had relaxed; and to control herself being no longer obligatory, her nerves were inclined to frolic over their sudden freedom.

Tactfully, he had, so far as conversation was concerned, left to her the initiative. To question her as to anything whatever, and especially regarding the matter with which their thoughts were most engaged, was not even remotely his intention. During their drive to the station scarcely a word had been exchanged; but no sooner were they seated in the Pullman than Camilla asked:

"Why on earth, Nick, didn't you telephone me?"

"I did," he answered. "Tried to, that is."

"You couldn't get the house?"

"Not in twenty minutes of it. Then I wired. Where was every one, do you suppose? Where were you?"

Her brown eyes snapped. "What a silly question!" she exclaimed. "Where do you suppose?"

"In bed, I fancy."

"Naturally. And do you imagine, with the telephone right beside me, I wouldn't have heard it had it rung?"

"My dear Camilla! I'm sure you would. It was that that puzzled me. Still, you might, you know, have been at the Wilmerdings', or any one of a score of places."

"But I wasn't, you see. In that case I shouldn't have got the telegram, should I?"

"Certainly not."

"I suppose it never entered your mind that Central might all that time have been ringing the wrong number?"

"No. I confess it didn't."

"That's evidently what happened. For a bright man, Nick, you can be very stupid at times."

"I daresay," Van Ness admitted. And added: "It's of no consequence. There was no train until four."

"What has that to do with it? Couldn't I have driven out? It was after three when the telegram came."

"Still, it's just as well. Nothing would have been gained by getting there sooner. And the sleep you did get was the very best thing for you."

To this she offered no rejoinder, but turned her face to the window, and beneath lowered lids regarded, dreamily, for a space, the flying landscape. It was a very brief space, though. Then she started up suddenly, with:

"The Wilmerdings. I wish you hadn't mentioned them. Why did you? How they'll rake this over!"

"It was the first name that occurred to me."

"Of course. It had to be. Now I can't get them out of my mind. They're sure to blame me. They've always thought Carey a god. They'll say I drove him to this by my coldness."

"Camilla!" Van Ness strove, pacifically. "You only imagine it. I'm sure you'll have all their sympathy."

And she almost flew at him.

"I beg you not to contradict me," she commanded, rather than pleaded. "I know them better than you do."

"Oh, I daresay!" he agreed for peace sake. "But there's my Hilda. She thought him rather a god, too. Still, she won't after this."

But at that Camilla rose in haste and walked to the forward end of the car, where she stood for possibly half a minute gazing through the glass of the door.

And as the journey progressed she grew only more and more irritable and more restless.

On their arrival at the Grand Central Van Ness proposed accompanying her to her home, but she practically closed the door of the taxi in his face. Then, as he was turning away, she flung it open again and called to him.

"On second thoughts, you'd better," she retracted. "They'll want to know, of course. And they'll have to be told. But I can't tell them. You can see the state I'm in. Only, if you have any pity for me whatever, make it brief. You'd better give the barest facts to Simpson. He'll tell the rest of them."

It was not, though, until they were about to alight that she added:

"And, Nick! Don't answer any questions or ask any. Remember that."

When they were in the great hall she gave him her hand, with:

"Forgive me. I've been a wretch. And you're so good. I'm going straight to my own rooms and send for Dr. Vanderslice. My nerves are in rags."

As Van Ness turned, after she had left him, his eye fell upon the evening papers, lying together on the hall table, and was held by the staring headlines:

CAREY BROOKFIELD KILLED IN NEW JERSEY
MYSTERIOUS WOMAN SUPPOSED MURDERESS

To Simpson, the butler, summoned by the footman that had admitted them, he said, pointing to that typed communication:

"It's true. No one saw who did it. You'll read the accounts, I suppose, but remember that they're probably most inaccurate, and that surmise is never to be trusted."

"Yes, sir. I understand, sir. Most unfortunate, sir."

"Quite right, Simpson. I hope you'll tell the rest what I said."

"Very good, sir. But, if you'll pardon me, there was a telegram came for Mrs. Brookfield, early this morning, sir. I suppose—"

"Yes. That was it," Van Ness interrupted. "I sent it myself, Simpson."

Now that Camilla was back in her own home and would soon be under the care of the family physician Van Ness's thoughts turned again to his niece, Hilda. Throughout the day she had never been quite absent from his mind. But he had been able, until now, to convince himself that only by the most remote chance could tidings of the tragedy have reached her. The sight of those headlines in the evening papers, however, made him now keenly aware

that, if she did not already know, she must very shortly learn; and, in spite of what he had told Camilla of her attitude, he was not altogether certain as to just how this emotional young ward of his might take it.

He had had more than one demonstration of her admiration for Carey Brookfield. In the immaculate purity of her girlish innocence she more than admired, she adored. He was to her like a big, elder brother whom she idolized. There had been times when Van Ness, knowing him for the hedonist that he was, had envied him this virginal affection. At such moments he had felt that he, himself, was but second in Hilda's regard, and he chafed under the compulsion of yielding first place to one so unworthy.

The Van Ness home was less than a dozen blocks from that of the Brookfields; and to reach it in the taxicab which he had kept waiting was a matter rather of seconds than minutes. To spare himself the possibility of an instant's detention he let himself in with his latchkey, instead of, as was his habit, ringing. And, finding the hall deserted, he dropped his hat, gloves and stick, and turned into the smaller drawing-room, in the hope that he might surprise his little family—it consisted of Hilda and an elder, unmarried sister of his, Amelia—with possibly some callers, still lingering about the tea-table. But the room was no less unpeopled than the hall.

Halfway up the broad circling staircase, however, he met Amelia descending. Between her and himself there was more than the usual family likeness. She had the same spare figure, the same snowy hair, and much the same discerning grey eyes. Only her lips were thinner and more compressed and her chin less prominent.

It was she who spoke first.

"I tried to get you at your office." she said, and he knew by her tone as well as her look that she was anxious about something.

In sudden access of alarm he uttered the girl's name:

"Hilda!"

"Yes. She's not well. I've had Dr. Vanderslice. He was here this morning, and he's coming again."

"It's that serious?"

"I'd hardly say that. It's just that he's not sure. She has some temperature, and something might develop. It may be it's only a cold. If so, he's stayed it."

"I'll go to her at once," Van Ness proposed, but his sister lifted a deterring hand.

"No, Nick. Please don't. She's sleeping, poor dear."

He retreated a step and half turned, leaning against the balustrade, and looking a little crestfallen. Then he asked:

"You've heard about Carey?"

"Yes. Reggie Wilmerding telephoned about noon. He'd seen it in one of the early editions."

"I hope you didn't tell Hilda."

"Certainly not."

"I'm glad of that. I was afraid she might learn it in some way. But tell me more about her. When was she taken?"

"If you'll wait for me in the library I'll tell you everything. But I must see Griggs for a moment first. I shan't be any time."

She passed him, continuing down the stairs, while he went on.

When, after a little, she rejoined him in the big room of book-lined walls and deep, restful chairs—the room of all rooms in the great house which he loved best—it was to relate a fairly succinct and well-connected story, not merely of what she knew for herself, but of what she had learned from Hilda, concerning all that had happened since his departure on the previous afternoon for the Burnhams'.

"You knew, of course," she began, "that she was lunching at Summit, yesterday, with Helen Wilmerding. I expected her home for dinner. But while I was out, myself—it must have been about five o'clock—she called up from Helen's to say that a motor party had been arranged and that they were going

to dine at a wonderful new place on Lake Hopatcong. She might stay at Helen's overnight. It depended on what time they got back. She told Griggs, though, that Teddy Winston was going and that it was possible he'd drive her back to the city. Only I was not to worry. So, under the circumstances, I didn't. But it seems that about everything that could possibly go wrong did so. At about four the telephone rang violently. It woke me out of a sound sleep, and, frightened half to death, I answered it. Teddy was speaking from the Savoy. They had been here, but could get no response to their assaults on the doorbell. They'd be back in a couple of minutes, and would I please see that someone opened the door for Hilda. Well, I opened it, myself. And that poor child!"

"What—what had happened?" Nick asked impatiently.

"Everything, as I've already told you. To begin with, the motor-party, it seems, originating with eight enthusiasts, dwindled to three before it left the Wilmerding house. There were suddenly remembered engagements, and there were flat refusals of consent from certain self-willed husbands. So, in the end, only Helen, Hilda and Teddy set out for the wonderful Lake Hopatcong resort. Then, no one of them having anything like an accurate knowledge of the road, they got lost, went miles and miles out of their way, and finally arrived too late to get anything but cold fish and weak tea. Returning, they were overtaken by a thunder storm, ran into a washout and were nearly all three killed. Hilda, of course, should have stopped at Helen's for the night. But Teddy was coming to the city. She was wet and bedraggled. Helen's things were all too small for her. And, as with any sort of luck at all they should have made the distance by two o'clock at the latest, Hilda risked it. And that's the whole thing in as few words as I'm able to cram it into."

"Good Lord!" cried Van Ness, his anxiety augmented. "Enough to give her her death. Do you suppose it's pneumonia? Did she have a chill?"

"It would be a miracle if she hadn't. But she didn't say so. And it's useless to suppose anything. We'll have to wait for Dr. Vanderslice's diagnosis."

CHAPTER VI

And while they waited her brother told her of his own experience, dwelling on the more sombre phases and, out of respect for her spinsterhood, almost ignoring the other element of the tragic happening at Labiche's.

But, before he had quite finished, the appearance of Griggs on the threshold diverted them both. Believing that it was the physician he had come to announce, they started up with one accord, only to be checked by:

"Mr. Rutgers to see you, sir."

"Oh, very good, Griggs. Send him straight up."

"Then I'll leave you," said Amelia. "You're dining at home, I suppose?" And when Nick nodded, she added: "Then you can tell me the rest at dinner."

Rutgers was the junior partner in the law firm of which Van Ness was the senior; a rather heavy-set young man of medium height and florid complexion. He knew the laws governing corporations backward as well as forward, but he was no less well versed in the intricacies of social relationships, legitimate and illegitimate, not only in the smart world, to which he was born, but in that half-sister world of Broadway and the white lights, of the theatres, the music halls, and the cabarets. And Van Ness was assured, even before his entrance, that his visit was attributable to the Brookfield affair rather than to any matter of mutual interest connected with the office.

"Well, Nick, old dear," he began with a smug smile. "I see you were in it up to your bridle-reins."

"If you mean by that that I was one of the first to see poor Carey after he had been done for, you're reasonably

correct. May I offer you a cigarette?" And Nicholas pushed towards him a box of silver filigree which rested on the table by which they stood.

"Too bad, isn't it?" Rutgers continued, helping himself. "What do you make of it?"

"Oh, as for that, speculation, in a general way, is easy enough. For once in his life, I suppose, he picked the wrong woman. She defended her virtue. And Carey got his desserts."

But Rutgers drew in his lips and shook his sleek, sandy head.

"Won't do," he came back, dropping into one of the deep chairs, and extending his not-too-long legs until his heels just touched the floor. "When did you ever hear of innocence carrying a revolver to a dinner engagement?"

"Isn't innocence ever suspicious?"

"If she were really innocent, and that suspicious, she wouldn't have gone. No, Nickey, you're on the wrong lay. I've talked it over with a bunch of fellows, down town and for the last hour at the club, and they're all just about as bright as you are. Why? Because, like you, they hit on what seems most obvious, whereas it's hardly possible."

"I suppose they've all ventured to name the lady in the case, too?"

"Every one, and every one gives her a different name."

"And you? You have the only correct theory, I assume, and likewise the only correct name. Is that it?"

"Not far from it, old thing. But, you see, I have an advantage, being, so to speak, on the inside. Carey and I, you know, poor boy, were rather pally. He was not the sort of a beat that kisses and tells; but he didn't take into account my constructive mind. Getting a bit here and there, to-day, next week, next month, and having a memory like glue, the piecing together isn't so difficult."

"I suppose not." Van Ness, who had still been standing, relaxed into the springy softness of a leather-covered settee. "Are you going to take your conclusion to the police, or just tip off one of the newspaper boys?"

"My dear Nick! How can you so misjudge me? In strictest confidence, I'm going to give it to you, and you only."

"Ah, I see! You wish to ascertain how it will appeal to my judicial mind. Well, then! Out with it!"

Neely Rutgers disturbed himself sufficiently to peer around the side of his high chair-back to make sure that no one had come suddenly within earshot. Then, in a half-whisper, he said:

"I'm willing to bet— But no. That would be brutal. For, in fact, I'm no end sorry for her. It was evidently her only way out."

"I'm sorry for her if she did it, no matter who she was," was Van Ness's rejoinder.

"I'll tell you the facts first and perhaps you'll drop on the name. I suppose you know that Carey worked his inside knowledge of Wall Street to further his amorous enterprises. If you don't, I do. Well, in this particular case, he proved pretty thoroughly how good his tips were. She and her husband— Yes, she's married—made money in bunches for awhile. They're none too well off, and she's always been devilishly extravagant. Brookfield imagined that she'd fall for him out of sheer gratitude, but she didn't. So, he took his second step. He got them both into Steel, big. It was to sky-rocket. In a week they were wiped out, clean. All they'd made, and a lot beside that they couldn't afford. Now, that much I know to be absolute fact."

"Yes? I'm beginning to get a glimmer."

"Of course she begged for a chance to recoup. But Carey held her off. I'm familiar with his method, I tell you. There's nothing particularly new about it. Hundreds have worked it. Hundreds are still working it. So, finally, he says, says Carey: 'Dine with me tonight at Labiche's and I'll make your everlasting fortune. Is it a go?' And she says it is, of course. But she's wise as to the price he may ask her to pay, so she goes armed. There you are! Neither of them got what they wanted,

but Carey's done for and she's poor, but pure."

There was a moment of silence, and then Van Ness said:

"It isn't Helen Wilmerding you're talking about, by any chance, is it?"

"Who else could it be?"

"Then you're wrong. Dead, dead wrong."

"You may think so, Nick. But you can't be as sure as I am that I'm right."

"I'm surer, Neely. For Hilda, Teddy Winston and she dined together last night, somewhere on Lake Hopatcong."

"You mean that?"

"Certainly. Hilda was one of her guests at luncheon, and I'm safe in guaranteeing that they were hardly out of each other's sight up to midnight."

Rutgers's chin dropped.

"All my dope gone for nothing," he muttered.

And Nick laughed.

Then, suddenly, his hand went into his breast pocket.

"If you need any further conviction," he said, "I have a trifle here that may furnish it. Did you ever see your friend, Mrs. Wilmerding, carry a vanity case of this pattern?"

And he held out to Neely his find of the previous night.

The junior partner examined it closely, turned it over and over, his brow slightly wrinkled and his lips half-pursed.

"If you can say whom that belongs to you'll come pretty close to naming the woman who did it."

Van Ness, as he added this, regarded fixedly young Rutgers's rapt, yet bothered, expression. Then, abruptly, the latter lifted his gaze and their eyes met.

"You—you found it in the room?" he asked.

Nick nodded.

"It never occurred to you, I suppose, to preserve the finger-prints?"

"Oddly enough, it didn't. I was very remiss, wasn't I?"

"On the contrary, old chap."

The answer piqued Van Ness. More than that, it irritated him.

"What the devil do you mean to imply?" he snapped back.

His caller shrugged slightly. Then, evidently in fear that this might have been observed and would be resented, he said quickly:

"Don't misunderstand me. But I gather, merely, that you weren't, and aren't, particularly interested in having the thing sifted or you would have turned that over to the coroner or the police."

"You mean I don't want the poor creature punished?"

"Do you?"

"I admit my sympathy is with her, whoever she is. I've already admitted it. That may seem a terrible thing to say. But—"

"Oh, I don't know about that. If you've identified this case—and I suppose you have—I don't see how you could do otherwise."

"But I haven't identified it. I feel only, that I've seen it before—though I may be mistaken about that—and I shrink from involving, through any action of mine, one whom, did I actually know, I'd be more inclined to applaud."

Rutgers reached for the silver box and helped himself to another cigarette. With match blazing, he said:

"I always thought you had a practically infallible memory."

"I have for some things. But, curiously enough, not for jewels or jewelry. Do you mean that you've seen the thing before? And remember where?"

"I think so." As he spoke he rose; and rising, laid the vanity case on the table. "I must toddle," he added.

"You won't tell me?" Van Ness said.

"Can you ask me? It's not the only one of the pattern, probably. And there's too, much involved, my dear Nick, to hazard a name. You must see that."

Van Ness walked to the end of the room with him. At the door, after they had shaken hands, Neely offered a suggestion:

"Hide that thing away. I would, if I were you."

CHAPTER VII

VAN NESS was more than ever disturbed by that final bit of advice from Neely Rutgers. If it meant anything it meant that someone he knew—and probably more than just casually—might reasonably be incriminated by connection with the vanity case which had so fortuitously come into his possession. Vainly he strove to cudgel his memory. And quite as vainly to think of any woman, friend or acquaintance, who, by any stretch of imagination, he could conceive of as having been Brookfield's companion and outraged slayer.

Had it not been for Hilda's experience of last night in company with Helen Wilmerding, he might, possibly, in view of Neely's argument, have been inclined to Neely's conclusion. But that, under the circumstances, was of course untenable. He could not doubt, though, that there were other women who might have actually played the rôle under like provocation and with equal justification. Women that he had no reason whatever to suspect, and possibly women that he knew very well indeed. But this only served to make the situation, coupled with Rutgers's innuendo, all the more irritatingly perplexing.

It was not until after dinner that Dr. Vanderslice made his second visit, and in the meantime Amelia, always with the pretext that Hilda was still sleeping, had barred him from his niece's room. He had intercepted the physician on his arrival, however, and had accompanied him to his patient, only to be shocked by the girl's flushed cheeks, bloodshot eyes, and inordinate restlessness; the latter reminding him, in a way, of Camilla's disquiet on the train.

There was, and had been for some time, to Van Ness, a growing resemblance between the woman and the girl. And in spite of the heightened colour and unusual eye-suffusion, it seemed to him never more marked than now. They were of the same brunette type, with clear creamy white skin, untouched by a suggestion of the olive, hair of an almost jet black, and eyes of deepest, velvety brown.

Amelia rose from beside the bed as they entered, and after a quick, deprecatory glance at her brother, said to the doctor:

"I think she's better. But you must speak to her. I can't turn my back that she isn't out of bed. When I came up from dinner, a little while ago, she was in her dressing room. Yet I had told her maid, whom I had left with her, under no circumstance was she to let her get up."

For a moment Hilda appeared a trifle abashed. But Dr. Vanderslice promptly relieved her of any lasting embarrassment.

"I shouldn't advise running up and down stairs," he said. "But a few steps here can do no harm if she feels like it."

"Did you want something, dear?" asked her uncle, bending over the footboard, where he stood regarding her. "Something that Marthe couldn't get for you?"

She nodded to him, understandingly, but he noted with a little pang that her usual smile was absent.

He was about to ask her what it was; to offer to see if he could find it; but the visiting practitioner put it out of her power to answer, by slipping between her lips the inevitable clinical thermometer. And for the seconds she held it there, he took count of her pulse.

Physically, at least, Vanderslice was in marked contrast to Burnham. He was big and broad and his grey beard was of the Vandyck model. It was said that his practice, counting gifts from grateful patients, had yielded him in some years more than a million dollars.

When he had written a new prescription, had assured his patient that she would be "quite fit" in a day or two, and Miss Van Ness had followed him to the door, Nicholas, in passing, leant over Hilda and put to her his delayed questions.

"Oh, it doesn't matter, Uncle Nick,"

she answered, a trifle impatiently, he thought. "It was only that I dreamed I lost something last night, and I wanted to see whether I had."

Then, for an instant, his heart constricted. And so did something in his throat. But his reason came to his rescue. He knew that it could be nothing more than a coincidence. Yet he stammered over the words:

"And—and had you?"

"I don't know," she answered. "Aunt Amelia drove me back here, before I could make sure."

"Whatever you lost, I'll give you a new one," he told her. And bending lower, kissed her on the forehead. "Good-night, dear. Sleep well, and have no more horrid dreams."

Outside the room he joined Vanderslice, and together they descended to the library.

"It's not serious?" he asked, anxiously.

"No. A slight cold, that's all, due to exposure last night. And she's upset nervously. Are you sure she hasn't heard about Carey Brookfield?"

"It doesn't seem possible. Unless that maid—"

"I'm afraid she knows. Somehow, I feel she's suppressing something."

"She's frankness itself," her uncle defended. "You must be wrong."

"Possibly. But— Well, I may be obsessed. I got the same idea from Mrs. Brookfield. Though God knows she has every reason to go to pieces and develop all kinds of symptoms. Horrible affair, isn't it?"

"Disgraceful. Atrocious. Won't you sit down?"

"I can't, thank you. I've other visits to make; and yet I never go out at night."

"But, tell me: How is Mrs. Brookfield? She bore up marvellously today."

"Did she? Well, she'd gone all to pieces when I saw her. I left her under an opiate. I hope for the best."

As they were saying good-night, Van Ness asked:

"What do you hear, doctor? Is there any hint, whatever, as to who was with him?"

Vanderslice smiled. "Any hint?" he repeated. "They're like the leaves of Vallambrosa. And all different."

"You have no theory of your own?"

"None." Then, suddenly: "Oh, I recall, now. This is interesting. Jimmy Moncure has a story. He was motoring in from somewhere in Jersey and passed Brookfield in his car going out. He got only a glimpse of his companion. She was pretty well veiled, it seems. But he's almost certain he recognized her. Was certain, in fact, until this thing came out. But, now, he says, he can't reconcile the girl with the subsequent event. It appears he took her for a débutante of last season. Some of them, he admits, he wouldn't be inclined to question. But this one he appears to regard as *sans reproche*."

"I fancy it wouldn't be the first maiden *sans reproche* that Carey caught in his net, or at least, tried to."

"I daresay. Still, girls like that don't go armed, do they?"

"Hardly," Van Ness agreed.

"There's nothing, really, that hasn't been said," Vanderslice continued. "They are even claiming that Mrs. Brookfield got wind of the *affaire*, followed, and shot her husband in a fit of unbridled jealousy."

Van Ness's cheeks flushed to the temples.

"That's outrageous," he cried indignantly. "I know, positively, that she was at home at the time. If you hear it again, doctor, for God's sake deny it on my authority. What won't those cursed scandal-mongers say?"

When he was alone he started pacing the library floor. With the tide of calumny, slander and defamation rising at such a rate, how could any woman hope to escape? Here, almost in a breath, Vanderslice, a man of the highest standing, had repeated two wholly irresponsible statements; one of which might be accepted as a reflection on Hilda, and the other openly, without any qualification whatever, charging Camilla with Brookfield's murder.

Under the circumstances would it not have been better for him to have given up the vanity case in the first place? By means of it, and the finger-prints upon it, as Rutgers had suggested, the culpability would, at least, have been restricted, and possibly directly traced. As it was, now, no one was immune.

Rather than allow this sort of thing to continue he'd surrender the vanity case to-morrow. He could easily find some explanation for having retained it. And then, Neely's final words echoed afresh in his ears: "Hide that thing away. I would, if I were you."

What had been implied by that? How near to himself was he in danger of striking by permitting the ownership to be established? Then, too, there was that dream of Hilda's. And her anxiety over it. Was it possible, after all, that it belonged to her? That he had seen it in her hands? And that its seeming familiarity was to be accounted for in that way? No, that was impossible. He remembered Hilda's case, now. Amelia had given it to her on her last birthday. There were no diamonds or rubies in its ornamentation. Only an H, in pearls. Pearls, of course, because they signified purity and innocence.

He was glad he remembered that. For, despite his effort to put such a horrid suspicion from him, one occurrence after another, even in the face of all he knew and believed, had inflicted a latent uneasiness. Now that that was stilled, what had he to fear? To whom that he knew and cared for, might it belong?

He ran over a long list of friends. But only a few of them appeared to be even remote possibilities. And some of these Neely Rutgers knew only slightly or not at all.

Finally, he determined to appeal again to Neely. On the chance of finding him at the club he went there. But, to his dismay, the young man had not been seen since early afternoon.

He waited until late, hoping that he might come in at any minute. He did not come. And Van Ness, on his way home, decided to delay another twenty-four hours before attempting to force the issue in that way. In the meantime he might, himself, remember. If by to-morrow night he was no less in doubt, he would insist on being given the name.

But, before to-morrow night came, there had been fresh developments which made this proposed course not only unnecessary but inadvisable. And Van Ness thanked his stars that he had delayed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE morning papers, which fairly bristled with all manner of details, even to the smallest, connected with the tragedy at Labiche's, contained nothing of any real importance concerning which Van Ness was not already informed. Finger-prints had been taken and were being developed, and the dead Brookfield's associations and affiliations were being delved into.

So far as could be, his movements of the previous day had been investigated. With great particularity he had been traced from his home to his office on lower Broadway. Some of the papers went so far as to state where he lunched and of what the luncheon consisted. His telephone calls from the office were printed at length, in capital letters, a separate line to each, though they included nothing whatever that was significant. He had gone uptown by taxicab at three-thirty, spent an hour at his club, and telephoned from there to his garage for the high-powered roadster, in which, shortly after five o'clock, he drove away unaccompanied.

And there the record ended.

There was reference, of course, to Mrs. Brookfield's prostration, and an interview with Dr. Vanderslice on the subject. Van Ness's own name appeared in all the reports as an intimate friend of the family. There was, too, a lot of speculative theory. Certain of Brookfield's intimacies were touched on, but most guardedly, and necessarily without names. To those on the inside, however, some of these were too appar-

ent for complete comfort. And Van Ness, with Neely Rutgers's narrative of the Wilmerding experience fresh in mind, at once recognized the *dramatis personæ* in a story which closely paralleled it.

He was, therefore, not greatly surprised when that morning at his office Reggie Wilmerding's name was brought into him; nor when, following it, Reggie appeared, angered to a white heat.

Reggie was tall, slim, and blond; with a thin face, rather a long, pointed nose, a natural sallow pallor, and a meagre, fair moustache with waxed ends. He dressed a bit too conspicuously for good taste and was never without a *boutonnière*.

He entered, waving the most unscrupulous of the dailies in a trembling hand.

"Have you seen this damnable scurrility?" he cried. "If you haven't you're the only one in town it's escaped. By God, I've been teetering for the last hour between coming to you or going to that scoundrel himself, and disfiguring him for life. I want him jailed, Nick, within the hour. You know, criminal libel."

Van Ness calmly took the paper from him and gestured him into a chair.

"Let me read it," he said.

Reggie sat down, but it was difficult for him to keep still. Several times in the next three minutes he started to express further his angry indignation, but Van Ness commanded silence.

"Well?" he said when he had finished and dropped the newspaper on his desk, which separated them.

"I know you don't go in for libel business, and all that. But you've handled our company affairs and you can make an exception. I want him put behind the bars, I say. There's not a damn word of truth in it from first to last."

"Then you haven't any case."

"What do you mean? Haven't any case?"

"Your name isn't mentioned, is it? The statements aren't true, you say. Therefore they can't apply to you. Why should you put on the boot if it doesn't fit you?"

Reggie stared, his mouth open. Then:

"But it's meant for us, I know it is. That's not a new story, you know, Nick. It's been in the air for some time. All except the last terrible part of it. I've been trying to nail it for months. It's foul. And now that that scum of the earth has put it into print I'm going to get his heart for it."

"I wish you could, Reg, but you can't. He doesn't identify you. 'A young society matron and her husband, living in a New Jersey suburb.' That doesn't fit Helen and you any more than it does several hundred others, except that you two happen to have been friends of Brookfield. But how many such friends may he have had over there that you know nothing about, not to speak of others that you do know about? If you say 'this means me,' then, no matter how you deny its truth, the world in general will believe the published story and not you. That's the nature of the world in general. Let it drop."

But Reggie Wilmerding wasn't at all inclined to accept such advice. He was angry and he wished to wreak his vengeance on the man he knew as his calumniator.

"Why," he went on, "Carey was the best friend in the world to Helen and me. He did give us tips, all right. But with the vile object intimated there? Never. Why, Helen and I are like a pair of turtle doves. And to imply that she was at Labiche's that night with him! When we were dining at Short Hills with the Steve Cartons, and playing bridge there until after one, because we got caught by the thunder storm and waited till it was over. And you say I can't do anything."

Suddenly Van Ness bent forward, resting his arms on his wide pedestal desk.

"Why I thought," he began, and abruptly checked himself. "You dined at Short Hills, you say?"

"Certainly. With Steve Carton and Bess. Why? You don't think—"

But Van Ness interrupted him. "I must have things mixed up," he explained. "I thought it was Helen that Hilda and Ted Winston were out with. I don't know how I got the impression."

"Oh, no," Reggie corrected. "Hilda was there for luncheon. At our place, I mean. She was leaving just as I got home. Helen drove her down to the train. I remember perfectly."

"I see," said Van Ness absently.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT Van Ness saw, or thought he saw, was that Wilmerding's call, including his indignation and his threats, was the veriest bluff. From first to last an effort was being made to fix up an alibi for Helen. The Lake Hopatcong trip, evidently involving falsification of the time it consumed, wasn't strong enough. She might have gone to Labiche's with Brookfield after that. He couldn't remember now accurately at just what hour Amelia had said they got back to Summit; or, indeed, if she had fixed that at all. It was quite possible that the washout and the greater part of the misadventures which delayed Hilda's home-coming, occurred between Summit and New York. So, in order to build something more impregnable, without hiatus, Reggie, presumably, had secured the connivance of the Steve Cartons.

In court, of course, such a flimsy fabric would be riddled in no time. But it was not intended for court. It was designed only for club and tea-table gossip, and aimed at confusing the issue. Van Ness resented it, nevertheless, because it so completely negatived Hilda's testimony, which he was ready to take oath was veracious.

The day, however, was to be for him such a succession of contradictions of what he believed to be true, that its close found him turbulently perplexed, devoid of anything stable whatever to which he dared pin so much as a tatter of his torn faith.

Among his early afternoon callers was that young Englishman, Hugh Chelmsford, a particularly well set-up chap, with a charmingly frank manner. He was anxious about getting the Brookfield place at Somerville. From what Van Ness had said of it he and Mrs. Chelmsford were inclined to believe it was just what they wanted. Did Van Ness know whether it was in the hands of any of the real-estate agents?

"Or, do you fancy," he added, "that this untimely taking-off of poor Brookfield will interfere?"

"Some agent may have it," was Van Ness's answer. "That I don't know. I'm afraid, though, that you can do nothing at present. I question that Mrs. Brookfield will wish to occupy it. But that is only my own judgment. And she can hardly be approached on the subject at this time. You see that."

Chelmsford saw it.

"Just our bally luck," he commented. "If we had delayed I should say it served us jolly well right. But we didn't, don't you know. Connie—that's my wife—called on Mrs. Brookfield yesterday morning. She'd met her out, somewhere, and we thought best to get about it that way, rather than for me to see him. Of course we hadn't heard a word at that time concerning what had happened. To cut it short, Mrs. Brookfield wasn't at home. The butler told Connie that she'd gone out of town the day before and hadn't returned. He believed she'd gone to Somerville."

"What time do you say this was?" Van Ness queried.

"Half after ten, or eleven. Not later than eleven."

"Aren't you mistaken about what the butler said? I was under the impression—"

"Oh, no! I'm quite certain. Possibly he was stretching it a bit. Orders, perhaps. But that's what he told Connie. If it hadn't been that we learned of the shooting just after that, we should have gone to Somerville by the noon train. So you see there's no doubt."

Later in the afternoon Van Ness called on Camilla. He had enquired for her before coming to the office, and had learned then that she was still sleeping.

When he called, Simpson received him. Mrs. Brookfield, he said, was denying herself to even her own family, by Dr. Vanderslice's direction.

He was very much tempted to secure a confirmation or denial of Chelmsford's story from the butler's own lips, but his sense of honour forbade it. And it recurred to him then, with freshened significance, that Camilla had adjured:

"Don't answer any questions or ask any."

There was one matter, though, that, for her own sake, he felt it best to go into. Assuming that the statement made to Connie Chelmsford was true, then the telegram of which Simpson had spoken—his telegram—must have arrived in her absence. If so, then her coming to Morristown on that early train was mysterious, if not indeed quite inexplicable, unless, by chance, the butler had opened it and telephoned its contents to her at Somerville. The question was: Had it been opened? If it hadn't, and later it should be, and read, what hideous construction might not be put upon her unbidden appearance?

"Oh, by the way, Simpson," he said, with an effort to seem casual, "that wire for Mrs. Brookfield which came yesterday morning. The one I sent. What became of it?"

"I have it, sir."

"Would you mind getting it for me? It can be of no service now."

"Certainly, sir." And he produced it from a drawer in the hall table. "A great many have come since. Condolence, I suppose, sir. And none opened yet. Poor lady! She takes it very hard, sir."

But Van Ness did not hear him. This was unopened. How, then, did she know? What had impelled her to take that train? And she had let him assume that she came in response to his message—this message which she had not seen.

He thrust it into a pocket as it was, and walked home, his mind in a turmoil. The very foundation of all that was sacred seemed rocking. But the end was not yet. In the hall of his own house he encountered Teddy Winston, and he saw, at a glance, that the boy had been drinking. His handsome young face was flushed; his fair hair, usually so straightly parted and sleekly brushed, was in woeful disorder. His scarf bulged over the edges of his waistcoat. Hat in hand he was evidently on the point of leaving.

"Why, hello!" Van Ness greeted cordially. "Been looking in to ask after Hilda?"

"Yes. I—I'm sorry she's ill. Too ill to see me, they say."

"Not like her, is it, Ted? You must have had the devil's own time of it, in that storm."

"Well, rather. It pretty nearly queered me."

Van Ness looked into the small drawing room. "Nobody in here," he said. "Come in for a minute, and tell me about it."

"I would, Mr. Van Ness; but I've got to beat it. Promised Billy Nancrede a game of rackets at five, and I'm late now."

"Oh, let Billy wait. I won't keep you long." And coupling the boy's elbow in his right hand he led him to a conveniently placed ottoman, and pulled him down beside him.

"Now, what happened?" he pressed.

"A storm," Teddy answered, grinning.

"I know that. But when? Where? What did it do to you?"

"Coming back from the lake. We had no chains, you know, and no top, either. It was my old car. And to make it worse something happened to the lights. It was after twelve when we got to that little box of the Wilmerdings, what with—"

"The Wilmerdings!" Van Ness exclaimed in assumed surprise.

"Certainly. Why not?"

"What did you go there for, of all places?"

"Had to take Mrs. Wilmerding home, didn't we?"

"What Mrs. Wilmerding? Not Mrs. Reggie?"

"Surely. Who else?"

"But the Reggie Wilmerdings were dining with the Steve Cartons that night at Short Hills."

"What!" exclaimed young Winston, taken aback.

"Mrs. Reg drove Hilda to the station for the six something train back to town. Where did you join her? That's what I'm trying to get at."

More flushed than ever now, the boy sprang up. "If Hilda's told you that much, wouldn't it be better to get her to tell the rest? I've got to go. Sorry if you don't believe me, Mr. Van Ness."

"How can I believe such a contradiction? If you can reconcile the two things, I'll be glad."

"Well, I can't," Ted returned, his hand digging in his pocket for his cigarette case. "Not in the time I've got, anyhow. Only I want you to know that we were all right, and had a chaperon aboard. If that's the trouble."

Van Ness's hand also went to his pocket for his own cigarette case to offer the lad who had evidently mislaid his. And, unwittingly, he produced, instead, the perplexing clue—Burnham's find—the vanity case.

"Here," he said, without looking, "help yourself!"

Teddy stared, and retreated a step. And then Van Ness saw.

"Pardon me," he apologized. "I didn't notice. Something I found. You don't by any chance recognize it, do you?"

But the other was wary.

"What's this?" he asked. "Another trap? I don't see why you should adopt this method, since you evidently know everything. She's told you about that, too, I suppose."

"Who's told me?" cried Van Ness, springing up as young Winston backed towards the door, his self-possession crumbling. "What do you mean?"

Had he been quite himself the boy would have realized then that the older man really knew nothing. But he was befuddled and he was angry, and the last vestige of his wariness deserted him. So he called

"Hilda, of course. It's hers. I ought to know. I gave it to her."

Van Ness stood for a moment, stunned. The bauble slipped from his suddenly nerveless fingers to the floor, and he covered his face with his hands. When he was able again to command himself, he was alone.

CHAPTER X

With what crashing force the revelation, so impulsively dropped, had fallen, he did not even then realize. For its first effect had been to stupefy, to deaden; and he had emerged from it still mentally benumbed, with no clear appreciation of more than a fragment of the horror it embraced.

His first impulse was to go at once to Hilda and return the vanity case. And with this purpose in mind he recovered it from where it lay on the rug at his feet. But, even with this action, a clearer consciousness began to awaken. The movement of itself flashed to him a picture of how Burnham must have stooped in the same way to pick it up from under the edge of the dressing-table at Labiche's. And he saw suddenly that little bedroom, with the host of erotic scenes it must have witnessed during the Labiche tenancy and the Brookfield patronage, and then, in culminating awfulness, the figure of the girl, so young, so lovely, so immaculate, standing before the mirror, endeavouring to enhance a beauty that required no enhancing, for the lustful eyes of the voluptuary so lustfully waiting.

To go to her, bearing such a reminder, was not to be thought of. Better was it that he never see her again than while under such emotional torture, with all manner of doubts pressing for resolution. In no mood now was he to face anyone, and she least of all. He must get away, somewhere, to be alone with this catastrophic thing. For, singly and in groups, the pertaining features were already rushing back upon him, headed by the one paramount and inclusive fact that the woman in the case, after whom the arms of the law

were reaching, the woman wanted for murder, was his own niece and ward.

Hurriedly consigning to his deepest pocket the gold case which was, so far as he knew, the one incriminating bit of evidence, Van Ness left the house. A minute later, finding himself on Fifth Avenue, he crossed that thoroughfare and plunged into the Park. There, subconsciously, impelled by a latent craving for solitude, he avoided the drives, keeping to the less frequented paths. Thus he walked for hours, unresting, without pause.

In the beginning his thoughts had coursed at random. For a while they had dwelt almost wholly upon Hilda Chalfin, from the time when, a tiny tot of six, she had been orphaned and he had brought her home; and then on through the intervening thirteen years, up to the immediate present. In speaking of her to Burnham he had called her his "elfin ward." But, was she elfin? Only in the better sense of that term, in that she was different from most girls of her age: given to innocent mischief, utterly care-free, and wonderfully fascinating. For she was not elfish; which is to say impish, weird and spiteful. Still, to Van Ness, she had, of late, always recalled a description of a fictional character that he had read somewhere, as having "a look of wild and nervous adolescence prisoned within walls."

But random thinking was at variance with both his nature and his training. Thought was with him, by long habit, an orderly process. And so he came, after a time, to marshal these crowding mental forces which had threatened to overwhelm him. The day, certainly, had been one of revelations. Yet they were all more or less conflicting. What he required, therefore, was to get at the truth. To imagine, to draw conclusions, would only, perhaps, entangle him the more. He knew now, of course, that Reggie Wilmerding's story must in the main be true. But there must also be a shadow, at least, of truth in Hilda's and Teddy's narrative. One part of it —that he had driven her home in the early morning—had Amelia's confirmation. He knew too, now, from Hugh Chelmsford, that Camilla was not in New York on the night of the shooting; and also, of his own knowledge, that she had come to Morristown by train, evidently informed of it, though his informing telegram had never been opened. And then he recalled that intimation of Dr. Vanderslice's that Camilla might know more of the tragedy than she admitted.

There were, therefore, three persons who could assist him very materially, he believed, to the truth. His niece, Hilda; Teddy Winston, and Camilla Brookfield. But he was quite convinced that no one of them would do so except under compulsion. Necessarily, to invoke the law was, under the circumstances, utterly out of the consideration. But, a lawyer himself, with no mean ability as a cross-examiner, he had it in his power to employ the law's methods.

Here, however, a fresh difficulty arose. Hilda was in no condition to be subjected to such an ordeal. Teddy Winston, already driven to the nepenthe of strong waters, had best be left to himself. Camilla, facing the trying experience of the funeral, fixed for the following day and needing all her fortitude for the coroner's inquest, set for the following week, was an even less available subject than either of the others.

And so it came about that, wearied by his hours of ceaseless walking, but with a definite purpose formed, Van Ness achieved at last a surprising calm and a certain measure of resignation to the period of waiting which he accepted as inevitable.

On the following morning he was able, even, to steel himself to sit with Hilda for a while in her room, to which she was still confined. And, while to view her fairness and listen to the soft, sweet cadences of her voice, reassured him not a little, the visit served to rouse in him afresh a violent hatred and anger towards the dead Brookfield. It came to him as a relief, therefore, when, later in the day he received a summons from

Washington for a delayed interview with the Attorney General on the morrow. Out of respect for Camilla, and to avoid any question that his absence might engender, he had attended the funeral—had served, indeed, as one of the pall-bearers—but had rigidly held himself from again looking on the face of the dead.

CHAPTER XI

JUNE had come. It was Thursday, the fourth, to be exact; and the hour was lacking but a few minutes of five in the afternoon. In Camilla Brookfield's rose-and-white-and-gold sitting-room Nicholas Van Ness, a model of perfect grooming, stood by a small Louis Seize table, a small vellum-bound book in his hand, his capricious attention flitting at random from one to another of the lines and couplets of French chanson therein printed.

Having desultorily turned a few pages he was about to replace it, when a resolution arrested him. Still holding it, he produced from an inner pocket a yellow envelope with black printing and a rudely scrawled superscription, which he inserted between the covers. Then he laid the little volume with others on the table, and turned away.

He crossed the room to the wide oriel window, beneath the awnings of which the fresh greens of park foliage were visible, and paused there, his hands locked behind him, his well-shaped head with its snow-white hair bent a little forward, and his lips compressed. He had thought that night, now nearly two weeks gone, driving to Labiche's, that should Brookfield die, his two greatest problems would be solved. But they weren't. They had only become the more complicated. For one of them was his unspoken love for Camilla, and the other was Hilda's growing admiration for the unworthy and impossible Carey.

He was given scant time now, though, for their consideration. For barely had he paused and begun than the faint rustle of Camilla's entrance interrupted.

She was in mourning, of course. That he had known she would be. But he was not altogether prepared for the exaltation of her beauty. As he had seen her last she was distinctly not at her best, as was quite natural; and he had feared that the intervening period, crowded with ordeals as it must have been, was too brief for any appreciable recovery. And here was not mere improvement, but transformation. Apparently she had dropped off years. She seemed as young as Hilda, and lovelier. And he remembered then that black had always been more becoming to her than any colour.

"Dear Nick!" she greeted with a smile of pleasure, giving him her hand. "I thought I was never to see you again. You have been cruel."

"I haven't meant to be," he told her. "On the contrary, I've denied myself to be kind."

And, when they were seated—he near the Louis Seize table, and she with her back to the oriel window—he spoke of his call to the Capital, and how he had been detained there by the Attorney General, who had enlisted his assistance in a case before the Supreme Court.

"Even on Decoration Day I worked," he added, "and Sunday last was the biggest day of all."

"You might have got me on the long-distance," she chided, with something of mischief in those brown eyes, never more luminous than now. "But no. And not so much as a line from you either. And you my very best friend."

"I've a prejudice against your telephone," was his rejoinder. "It played me false when I depended upon it most. You must not forget that."

"I want to forget it," she said. "And I'm beginning to succeed. Won't you help me?"

"With all my heart. Only—"

"Only, you say! Only what?"

"Only, if you mean the whole miserable affair—and I suppose you do—isn't it a little too soon to ask it?"

"Why?"

"Because it isn't finished with, is it? The mystery isn't solved yet."

"The inquest ends it," she asserted. "That was Monday, you know. You saw the verdict, didn't you?"

"I did. Yes. The coroner failed. But the police are still to be considered. They may turn up something at any time. And it would all have to be gone over again."

"But the police will never find out."

"How can you be sure?"

"I feel it," she said. "Every day makes it less likely."

He was watching her hands. How beautiful they were, so slim, so white, and the fingers so finely tapered, and so well-cared-for! But, though she was probably unconscious of it, they were beginning to move restlessly. The first sign of rising nervous tension.

"I shouldn't care to be in the guilty one's shoes," he told her, "for all that. Any day there may be a leak somewhere."

"No," she insisted. "You're wrong, Nick. I'm sure you are wrong."

"Then tell me why you are so sure. Intuition—even a woman's—is not infallible. Have you anything more than that?"

"Nick!" she exclaimed suddenly, with what struck him as feigned indignation. "What are you saying? How could I have? You don't imagine that I, of all persons—"

"Camilla, my dear girl," he interrupted her. "Hadn't we better be quite frank with each other? You've just declared that I am your 'very best friend.' You can't doubt my entire loyalty. Why then hide anything from me?"

"But I'm not," she declared, her voice under perfect control, but her fingers intertwining. "Nothing. You must know I wouldn't, Nick."

He smiled a quietly tolerant smile, but his chin was never more determined.

"Then you won't mind answering a few simple questions?"

"Certainly not. How funny you are! As many as you like, Mr. Nicholas Van Ness, attorney and counsellor at law. What is the first one?" And her laugh rippled.

"That's a dear," he encouraged. "The first one—let me see. Suppose we make it: Where were you on the night that the crime occurred?"

"Where was I?"

"Yes. At the time it happened, we'll say?"

"I thought I told you that. Here, of course."

"You're quite sure?"

"Perfectly."

"Did you give Simpson orders to tell callers you had not been home since early the preceding day?"

"How ridiculous! Certainly not."

"Then he must have done that of his own volition?"

"I suppose so. If he told such a thing."

"But you did go to Somerville the previous day, didn't you?"

Camilla hesitated. "Why, yes," she said at length, on a long breath.

"What time did you get back?"

"I really don't remember."

"I don't ask the exact minute, or even the hour. Before dinner?"

"Oh yes. Before dinner. I just went out to see to the packing of some things to be sent to the Berkshires."

"You dined here, then? Alone, or had you guests?"

"Yes, I dined here. There were no guests."

"And in the evening? What did you do?"

"I read. I retired early."

"But you didn't hear the telephone."

She moved now, a little restlessly.

"I thought we had discussed that," she said. "Central evidently rang the wrong number."

"Oh, yes!" Van Ness agreed. "I remember.

"I don't suppose you heard the bell when the telegram was brought? My telegram, I mean."

"Naturally not."

"Who awakened you?"

"Suzanne."

"I see."

Van Ness turned to the table at his side and took up the little vellum-bound book of French chansons.

"Is that all?" Camilla asked with a barely perceptible sigh.

"No. Not quite," he told her, riffling the leaves, and finding the yellow envelope apparently by accident.

As he extracted it and turned it over he shot a glance at her, and saw, for the first time, a look of fear in her eyes.

"How odd!" he said, with a light chuckle. "Here's a telegram now, and it's not been opened."

But already she had recovered herself.

"Hasn't it?" she said with a capital assumption of indifference. "I daresay not. There were so many came, you know. And the house was so full of people. His near relatives and mine."

"But this one," Van Ness objected, "isn't one of sympathy."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know?" he repeated. "Because it's dated in pencil. I fancy it's in Simpson's hand. He's marked it '2.10 a.m.' And the date is that of the day following that affair at Labiche's. Hadn't you better open it?"

But Camilla declined.

"Not now," she said, a bit irritably. "Do finish your questions, please. My nerves, you know, are still not any too strong."

He leant towards her, all sympathy.

"My dear child," he soothed. "Why won't you tell me the truth? Why prolong this thing? I hold here the evidence that practically refutes every answer you've given me. This is my telegram. You weren't here when it came. You never got it's message."

For a long moment, holding her breath, her eyes wide, she sat staring at him, in dumb consternation.

"I'm right! You know that! Don't you? Now tell me!" he begged. "Why all this deception? This misrepresentation? What is it all for? Whom are you trying to shield?"

Now, indeed, did she remind him of Hilda. The Hilda of six, it seemed to him, for she had been an emotional child, easily hurt, and prone to tears. Camilla's lovely lower lip was trembling, her dear brown eyes were misty with gathering floods. All her courage, all her defiance, were quite gone. She wilted and gave way. The flood gates were over-ridden. She wept. Wept tumultuously. And, in pity for the inadequacy of her handkerchief, Van Ness supplied her with his own, and fought against an, at moments, almost overwhelming passion to take her into his arms.

CHAPTER XII

It was the tea which did most to give her fresh poise. She must have caught the barely perceptible tinkle of porcelain, for she was up and at the window, before Simpson and a footman appeared, her back to the room and her flushed face thus hidden. It was Van Ness who dismissed them both, and poured the first cup for her himself.

For a little while, after she had come back and taken the same chair again, neither of them spoke. He had handed the tea to her without a word, and she had drunk it in silence, while he went on pouring for himself. And all the while the tension had not perceptibly lessened. But when he took the empty cup from her, he asked:

"Will you have another? Please do." and she answered:

"Yes, Nick. You're so good to me."

Then again there was stillness, broken only by the scratch of a match for the cigarette he had placed between his lips. But presently, between sips, she said:

"How on earth did that telegram get into that book?"

"Since I am asking candour," replied Van Ness, "I shall be candid myself. It was I, Camilla, who put it there."

"You?"

"Yes. Simpson spoke of it the afternoon I brought you back from Morristown. I fancied, then, that you had read it, of course. But, when later I suspected you hadn't, I thought it safer with me and asked him for it."

"Oh, what a fool I was not to have asked him myself! But I was too wretched at the moment and, later, I was afraid. Then all those others came, and I consoled myself that it had got into a wastebasket and been burned."

"Will you read it now?" And he took it from the table where it lay, and for a second time, offered it to her.

But again she declined it.

"May I open it then? I forget just what I said in it."

"If you wish it, by all means."

He did so, read, refolded it, and returned it to the table.

"What I must know," he said earnestly, "is, how, without that, you learned?"

She finished her tea and passed him her cup. Then, after a moment's pause, she said, quietly:

"I was there."

He winced, as though she had struck him.

"There!" he repeated, in doubting astonishment. "At Labiche's?

"With *him?*"

"When he was shot, yes."

"Camilla!". His face was ashen.

"Oh, don't be alarmed," she hastened. "I didn't shoot him."

"But how, in God's name? Why? Why did you go?"

"That," she answered defiantly, "I won't tell you."

He gazed at her, unwinking. And, as he gazed, it came to him. He saw. If not all, certainly this: the motive for her silence.

"You were there to save Hilda." He flung it at her, and her eyes, before she spoke, told him that he was right.

"Ah, you—! She has spoken then."

"Not a word. But—" In an instant he had produced the vanity case. "This was found in the room."

"Poor child!" she murmured. "And you, of all persons, had to find it."

"Burnham found it, really," he said, and wondered at his own precision.

For a cruel and overpowering fear was upon him. Had Camilla come too late? Had the "poor child" been already sacrificed? He might reason. But of what use was reason? Were her hands stained by the blood of the beast? And, his composure quite gone, he cried:

"Tell me! For God's sake tell me everything!"

The cry startled her. In all the years she had known him she had never seen him like this. His agitation struck her dumb.

He mistook her muteness for admission. And suddenly he bent forward, elbows on knees, his face buried in his hands.

Seeing him thus, she seemed to sense his thought, and speech returning, she said:

"No, no, Nick! Not that, really! I swear it! Hilda is as guiltless as you are."

And then, as he had asked her, she told him all, with no reservation whatsoever.

CHAPTER XIII

In order that he might understand fully she started her narration at a point nearly a week prior to that fateful May night. Hilda had told her then of having had a quarrel with Teddy Winston. There was nothing unusual about that, though. He was in love with her, and, of course, wildly jealous. Camilla thought the girl cared for him more than for any man she knew. But, out of sheer mischief, she loved to tease him. And, something she had said this time had made him furious.

"I didn't know then—she didn't tell me—what it was. That was to come later from Teddy, himself," Brookfield's widow continued. "But it seems that the boy had gone off in a huff, after saying some pretty cruel things, and that Hilda was more resentful than sorry. I tried to argue with her from his standpoint, but she was bent on making him regret. 'I'll give him something to be really jealous about,' she said, laughing. And I heard no more of it, until, late that afternoon, at Somerville, just as Suzanne and I were preparing to start back to town, who should turn up there but Teddy,

with all the, to him, rather startling details.

"He was in a fine frenzy, as you may believe. It appeared then, from his story, that their quarrel had been about Carey. You may imagine how seriously I took that. Carey was nearly old enough to be her father, and had known her, it seemed to me, almost since she was a baby. And even when I learned that she had threatened to go with Carey to some awful road house to dine, I only smiled indulgently, knowing there was no real harm in Hilda, and believing confidently that Carey respected her for the lovely child she was.

"But, as I've said, Teddy was terribly excited. I was at a loss to understand, at first, how he knew I was at our country place. And it seems he didn't. He had been playing golf all afternoon at Baltusrol, and was on his way over to dine with the Breretons, when, of all things to happen, just as he was about to cross the tracks at the Short Hills station, Carey's car turned into the road in front of him, and he recognized Hilda as the passenger. He rambled a lot about Fate arranging that he should be there, and that I should be where I was, too.

"It seems he never thought of his dinner engagement from that moment. He just trailed Carey's car. It was a little too speedy, though, for that rattle-trap of his, and, after doing his best, he lost it. He'd got it into his head, though, that as they were headed this way it was Carey's purpose not to take her to any road house at all, but to bring her to his own secluded, and at the moment unoccupied, rural home. Simply, I suppose, because the last he saw of them they were coming this way. So he dashed into the grounds, and there never was a more surprised youngster than he was when he discovered me.

"He knows the country out that way better than I know it, myself. And we both concluded that the objective, really, was a place called Laurel Inn, about five miles further on. Maybe you know it, yourself. Of course you do. Well, then, you know, that it's quite respectable. We had often dined there ourselves. I told Teddy that, but there was no arguing with him. His mind was made up as to the nefariousness of Carey's purpose, and nothing would do but that I should go with him and surprise them, red-handed, so to speak. In his state of mind there was no telling what might happen if I let him go alone, so I sent Suzanne back to town, and I went."

"And they were there?" Van Ness asked.

"They were there. The boy was all for making a scene, and I had a terrible time dissuading him. You see they were in the big public dining room and everything was as right and proper, from my viewpoint, as could be. I may as well tell you now that for two years and more I've had no illusions about Carey. But I did give him credit in this matter for some decent feeling. We got a table where they wouldn't be likely to see us, and, just as I thought I had Teddy pretty well tamed down, he observed that Hilda was drinking champagne. Then he nearly had a spasm. This, he declared, was merely preparatory. I saw, though, that she was drinking very little, and still believed the boy wrong.

"Well, we made a pretence of dining, and stayed there until they left. I don't know what time it was, but to me it seemed ages before they rose and Carey helped her with her wrap. Then, for the first time, I began to doubt my own judgment. There was something in the way he helped her—a certain air of possession, mingled with a caressing lingering of his hands—that actually struck terror to my heart. And from that moment I was quite as determined as Teddy to see the thing through."

A suspicion of a frown slightly furrowed Van Ness's brow and his jaws set hard. But he did not interrupt.

"We got away right behind them, and managed to keep pretty close. The only way I can account for that is that Carey wanted to kill time and wasn't letting his car out. If he had let it out he'd have left us so far behind that we

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"He was in a fine frenzy, as you may believe. It appeared then, from his story, that their quarrel had been about Carey. You may imagine how seriously I took that. Carey was nearly old enough to be her father, and had known her, it seemed to me, almost since she was a baby. And even when I learned that she had threatened to go with Carey to some awful road house to dine, I only smiled indulgently, knowing there was no real harm in Hilda, and believing confidently that Carey respected her for the lovely child she was.

"But, as I've said, Teddy was terribly excited. I was at a loss to understand, at first, how he knew I was at our country place. And it seems he didn't. He had been playing golf all afternoon at Baltusrol, and was on his way over to dine with the Breretons, when, of all things to happen, just as he was about to cross the tracks at the Short Hills station, Carey's car turned into the road in front of him, and he recognized Hilda as the passenger. He rambled a lot about Fate arranging that he should be there, and that I should be where I was, too.

"It seems he never thought of his dinner engagement from that moment. He just trailed Carey's car. It was a little too speedy, though, for that rattle-trap of his, and, after doing his best, he lost it. He'd got it into his head, though, that as they were headed this way it was Carey's purpose not to take her to any road house at all, but to bring her to his own secluded, and at the moment unoccupied, rural home. Simply, I suppose, because the last he saw of them they were coming this way. So he dashed into the grounds, and there never was a more surprised youngster than he was when he discovered me.

"He knows the country out that way better than I know it, myself. And we both concluded that the objective, really, was a place called Laurel Inn, about five miles further on. Maybe you know it, yourself. Of course you do. Well, then, you know, that it's quite respectable. We had often dined there ourselves. I told Teddy that, but there was no arguing with him. His mind was made up as to the nefariousness of Carey's purpose, and nothing would do but that I should go with him and surprise them, red-handed, so to speak. In his state of mind there was no telling what might happen if I let him go alone, so I sent Suzanne back to town, and I went."

"And they were there?" Van Ness asked.

"They were there. The boy was all for making a scene, and I had a terrible time dissuading him. You see they were in the big public dining room and everything was as right and proper, from my viewpoint, as could be. I may as well tell you now that for two years and more I've had no illusions about Carey. But I did give him credit in this matter for some decent feeling. We got a table where they wouldn't be likely to see us, and, just as I thought I had Teddy pretty well tamed down, he observed that Hilda was drinking champagne. Then he nearly had a spasm. This, he declared, was merely preparatory. I saw, though, that she was drinking very little, and still believed the boy wrong.

"Well, we made a pretence of dining, and stayed there until they left. I don't know what time it was, but to me it seemed ages before they rose and Carey helped her with her wrap. Then, for the first time, I began to doubt my own judgment. There was something in the way he helped her—a certain air of possession, mingled with a caressing lingering of his hands—that actually struck terror to my heart. And from that moment I was quite as determined as Teddy to see the thing through."

A suspicion of a frown slightly furrowed Van Ness's brow and his jaws set hard. But he did not interrupt.

"We got away right behind them, and managed to keep pretty close. The only way I can account for that is that Carey wanted to kill time and wasn't letting his car out. If he had let it out he'd have left us so far behind that we

never could have overtaken him. Twice he stopped at road houses and we shadowed them as before. At one of them, near Sinking Ridge, I was almost certain he saw us. But I must have been mistaken. And each time there was more champagne. So I came reluctantly to Teddy's view as to his purpose.

"When at length we found that we were on the Whippany road, and, for the first time, likely to be distanced—for he was running then like the wind and we could see a thunder storm brewing—Teddy gripped my arm, in a fresh tumult of excitement, and said: 'I knew it! I knew it! This is what he's had in mind all the time! He's heading for that damn French place, Labiche's; the rottenest joint within fifty miles of New York.'

"It was a new name to me," Camilla pursued, "but before the night was over I learned that it was a sort of second home to my so-called 'uxorious husband.'"

And there was a world of bitterness in the way she said it.

Van Ness made no comment.

He sat tense with interest, his cigarette burned out and the others in his case were forgotten.

It was this part of her story that held the vital point which had perplexed him and baffled the authorities, and he was impatient for it.

"I remember looking at my watch as we entered," she went on, "and saw that it was nearly twenty minutes past eleven. I expected a restaurant here—a big room, you know—as at the other places, and when I found that there were only private rooms it struck me that we had come all that way, only to be frustrated in the end. I'm sure now that it couldn't have been Teddy Winston's first visit. He knew too much about it. In the first place, he ran the chance of upsetting everything or winning everything, right at the start. For he followed so quickly on Carey's heels that if Carey had turned his head he must have seen him. But in this way he saw the suite into which that French wretch ushered them, and when he got the chance Teddy demanded the suite opposite. Fortunately, it wasn't occupied, and so we got it. That was another instance of Fortune being with us. I prefer Fortune to Fate, you see.

"We sat there on pins and needles, both of us. Every tick of the watch seemed an eternity, while we trembled to think of what might be happening behind that closed door across the passage. Again and again the boy started up, intent on forcing his way in, if necessary. I was far the calmer of the two, even then, as I had been from the first. And I made him wait. I can't tell yet how I came to be so clear-visioned, but I can see now how, but for that, everything would have gone wrong, and the innocent, probably, have suffered more than the guilty. I am really very thankful, Nick."

And if Van Ness gathered from that she regarded what befell her husband as a blessing, he not only didn't blame her, but experienced a pleasing personal satisfaction that it should be so.

"I insisted, in the first place, that nothing should be done until we had given our order. And it seemed, of course, that the waiter would never come for it. When he did, and was gone again, I relented in so far as to consent to the leaving of our door ajar. For, if there was to be any cry from that suite opposite, I wanted to hear it. But there wasn't. Evidently the same waiter was to serve both parties, for through the open space in our doorway I saw him presently enter the other room with his tray. The promptness with which they were served indicated to me that the supper had been ordered in advance."

"It was," Van Ness confirmed. "Ordered for eleven. They were late for it."

"I thought so. When the waiter withdrew Teddy again wanted to rush in. 'Before the door is locked,' he said. But again I restrained him. I don't even now know why or just how. But it worked. Worked beautifully. Not a sound reached us. We just sat there

waiting, waiting endlessly, as I have said. And then, what, of all things, do you suppose happened?"

"I don't suppose, I know," was Van Ness's answer. "Carey came out."

"Yes. With a champagne bottle in his hand. They told you about that?"

"Labiche told us that night. I saw it in the newspaper accounts too."

"And we went in. Both of us. Immediately. Poor Hilda! I wish you could have seen her eyes. They flamed at Teddy. She saw him first. I followed, you know. When she saw me, they dropped. Oh, how I pitied her. She was so ashamed. For the first time in my life I saw her thoroughly embarrassed. I fairly ran to her and took her in my arms. I said: 'Get your things at once. You must come with us before he returns.' And, without a word, she started to obey. She went into the other room. You saw it, I suppose. What on earth kept her there I haven't found out yet. I don't suppose it was actually over two or three minutes at the most; but it seemed aeons to me. Teddy stood like a statue by the door from the passage. Or, rather like a sentry on guard. When, as I say, aeons passed and the girl didn't return, I went to her. She was leisurely pinning on her hat. She deemed dazed. Then I knew that she must have taken more of the champagne than she, even herself, realized. It was awful. Oh, Nick, she would have been such easy prey for him!"

"Don't!" he said. "Don't! Go on!"

"I picked up her wrap from the bed, and put it around her. Then I fairly pushed her into the other room. I saw there were French windows there. I pulled back the red-rep curtains from one of them. And I discovered a shallow balcony outside. And just then a flash of lightning showed me that the lawn was not more than three feet beneath. We could go that way and avoid a possible meeting with Carey. I still had one arm about her, and with the other hand I beckoned to Teddy. 'Come!' I said. 'We'll go this way.' But the boy laughed in my face. 'You may,' he said, 'if you like. And I'll join you later. Later—after I've attended to him.' Again I pushed Hilda. I pushed her through the window, out into the rain. And crossed over to Teddy, taking him by the arm. 'Look out!' he said. 'This might go off.' And then, for the first time, I saw that he had a pistol in his hand. One of those murderous-looking automatic things."

"Where in God's name did you get it?" Van Ness asked.

"He told me, later. When, at the Somerville house, I left him for a little—it was in Carey's den that we'd had our talk—he discovered it quite by accident, on the mantelpiece, and put it in his pocket without looking at it. He had no idea whether it was loaded or wasn't, he declared. And I believe him."

"He soon found out," Nick grimly observed.

"Yes. Very soon. For he'd hardly cautioned me when Carey came back. If he had had an appointment to meet us there, he couldn't have been more composed. I never saw anything like it. 'To what am I indebted for this little surprise?' he said. Actually said it. It's the sort of thing one hears the villain say in a play. And there was something of banter in the way he quoted it. If Teddy needed anything to make him more furious than he already was, that must have done it. 'To my discovery of what a damn cad you are,' he gave him back. But Carey acted as if he hadn't heard him. He just looked about the room an instant, and then walked to the door of the other room and looked in there. 'What have you done with Hilda?' he asked, and added an irony that I know made Teddy squirm: 'she's under my protection, you know.'

"I never opened my lips. I couldn't. I saw the boy plunge at him. There was no pistol in his hand, then. I'm certain of that. Both his hands were empty and open wide. It struck me that he wanted to tear at Carey's face. He flung himself on him. But Carey got him around the waist, somehow, and twisted him sideways. He kicked and

clawed. But it was at the air. And, holding him that way, he said to me: 'Hadn't you better go? This isn't just the place for you. You don't fit in, somehow.' He'd hardly finished, when the shot rang out. I saw the flash, and, as Teddy dropped on his knees, I saw the pistol in his hand. He must have had it in his pocket. My first thought was that it was Teddy who was shot. When he fell, I mean. But Carey staggered back and seemed to be bracing himself against the wall. It took seconds for me to grasp just what had happened, and when I did I must have rather gone to pieces. I don't remember leaving the room. I don't remember anything, indeed, till I was outside and the rain beating in my face. Outside in the dark and quite alone. Teddy was trying to find Hilda. He came back with her the next minute, she had jumped to the ground and was crouching under the balcony. She clung to me, and we ran, Teddy leading, to a shed under which his car was.

"Then I must have lost count again, I fancy. When I came back once more we were tearing like mad through the storm and the car rocking like a skiff in a gale. We were all soaking wet, too. For that car is only a runabout, you know. There was no top, no curtains, no anything. We were all three on the one seat, and Ted had a lapcloth over his head and shoulders. He'd lost his hat. Besides, the lights weren't working and it's a miracle we weren't all killed. For my part, I wished just then —yes, and for days afterward, that I had been."

Suddenly Van Ness exclaimed: "Jove! I remember. It was your car. Burnham and I nearly ran you down between Whippany and Morristown. How he swore! Three women in a car, he said, without lights."

"What would you have thought if you had, and we'd all been killed, and you alive? Could you ever have solved the mystery?"

"Thank God I wasn't asked to," was his reply. "And you and young Winston were the two patrons, Labiche told us, he sent away without their learning a scrap of what happened. That's irony for you."

There was not very much more for Camilla to tell then, except to make clear why, without being bidden, she had arrived at Morristown the following morning, apparently in response to his telegram.

"You see," she said, "I stopped over night in the house at Somerville. I couldn't go home, knowing what I did, and face the servants. Yet, fancy what a horror it was to stay in that place alone! I didn't even try to sleep. I could hardly sit still. Hilda, poor child, wanted to stay with me. But I saw that that was impossible. She must go back, and she must have some story to tell that would account for the hour. She had already attempted to cover her appointment with Carey by telephoning from the Wilmerdings') about the invented motor party. So, between the three of us, we fixed up the sequel. Do you remember how your mention on the train of the possibility of my having gone to the Wilmerdings upset me? That was the reason.

"But, to get on: As those frightful hours passed, it came to me that I'd almost certainly be sent for. Whether Carey lived or died—and I had no means of knowing which it was—they'd probably try to get his wife to him. The more I thought of it, the more sure I was. And long before dawn I'd made my plans. I found an old time-table which showed a train from Bound Brook that would get me to Cranford before five. And Cranford, you know, is only about five miles from Millburn, 'cross country; and at Millburn I could board the first morning train from New York stopping at Morristown. I got through some of the long wait by bathing, digging out a last year's frock and hat, and arraying myself as contrastingly as possible with the woman of the night.

"I would have walked to Bound Brook, if necessary. But a milk man, going to get his milk supply from that very train, offered me a lift. And at

Cranford I was lucky enough to find a so-called jitney. But to be met by you, Nick, of all persons, on the Morristown platform, nearly floored me."

"Suppose I hadn't been there?"

"If neither you nor anyone else had come to meet me I should have taken the first train back to town. I couldn't have done otherwise."

Van Ness relaxed. Once again he lighted a cigarette. Then, without seeming object he took between thumb and forefinger the folded telegram and began tapping the table with it.

"And I suppose," he said as if just for something to say, "if this hadn't fallen unopened into my hands I might never have heard the truth. Eh, Camilla?"

"Never is a long time," she answered. "But you certainly wouldn't have heard it to-day."

He unfolded it again, and once more he held it out to her.

"Won't you read it now?" he asked.

"But why should I? No. Destroy it. Tear it up. Burn it."

For a moment he considered. Then he rose, walked to the empty fireplace, and stooping, struck a match, ignited the paper, and holding it by one corner, watched it flame and blacken to a curling cinder.

Not until months after, when he was her guest at the Berkshire place, near Lenox, did he tell her what he had, upon consideration, that day, kept hidden.

It had not been *his* telegram after all. He had discovered that, of course, only after opening it. It was a telegram, dated Boston, which read:

"*Called here on business. Returning probably to-morrow.*" And it was signed: "*Carey.*"

CHAPTER XIV

It is hardly probable that Van Ness would have bared the fact, even then, had it not been that what occurred that May night at Labiche's was revived in general and in particular by a cable in the morning paper, telling briefly of the death of Teddy Winston in Flanders, where, for only two weeks, he had been driving for the American Ambulance.

Teddy's part in the affair had been, throughout, the saddest chapter, really, of the story. Prior to that night he was as admirable a boy as there was in all that smart upper-crust set. And his purpose to save the girl he loved from violation at the hands of an unconscionable voluptuary was praiseworthy in the highest degree. Yet, because he was as fine as he was, it ended him. His conscience seems to have got him at once. And because it gave him no peace, sober, he was weak enough to try to still it—to drown it, in fact—in drink. To the everlasting credit of Hilda, it may be said—for it is certain that she was fond of him, though doubtful that she signally loved him—that, realizing the impulsion, she did not reproach him. It was rather he himself who realized that he was no longer a fit worshipper and forsook his shrine.

It was in August of that year that war blazed across Europe, and, with almost the first alarm, Teddy seemed to see in it the refuge he craved for. From Paris he wrote to Camilla a long letter the burden of which was that he had tried to convince himself that in firing the pistol, that night, he had done it in self-defence. But he knew that wasn't true. There had been murder in his heart from the moment he took it from the mantelpiece at Somerville. He had told her that he wasn't sure whether or not it was loaded. But he was. He had examined it and knew that it held a fresh slide. If to save Hilda the shot had been necessary he thought he'd feel different. But Hilda was already saved. She was out of the room. Therefore, he had killed Brookfield for one reason and one only.

"I hated him," he wrote. "He was unarmed. I didn't give him a chance. It was dastardly. The sooner I get mine over here, the sooner I'll be out of torment."

Camilla had kept the letter, showing it to no one. But this day of the cable she gave it to Van Ness to read.

"Poor beggar!" he commented.

"Then he simply got what he went after."

"I wonder if we all don't get that in the end if we go after it hard enough," she rejoined.

"I wonder." There was a pause then. It was late afternoon, and they had been having tea in the garden. They sat on a marble bench. In the centre of a marble basin a fountain played. Camilla's mother, who was stopping with her, had, half an hour ago, returned to the house.

"Sometimes," he ended the pause with, "there are reasons why we can't go as hard as we'd like."

"What, for instance?"

"Well, sheer decency, for one." And he looked into her eyes, with a little half-quizzical smile.

"Which reminds me," she said, as though darting to a new matter. "That telegram of Carey's you told me of. You were wondering about the Boston date. And I let you wonder. But it was not so mysterious as you seemed to think. Telegrams from him from various cities were quite the ordinary thing. I solved the problem long ago. He simply dictated them by telephone, and set the hours at which they were to be sent. The ordinary man might have trouble in doing that. But his name, of course, was enough. The telegraph company's bill was sent him on the first of the month."

"You knew this, and yet—"

"I knew a great deal more, 'and yet,' as you say. He knew, too, that I was not altogether ignorant of his infidelities, but he chose to keep up this mockery just the same. Our relations, I don't mind telling you, Nick, ceased more than two years ago, when I made my first discovery. Since then—and before, too, for all I know—he excused himself, when he thought it worth while, on the pretext of my coldness."

Even a far less cleverer man than Nicholas Van Ness was must have detected then that this was not in any sense a new matter.

"Sheer decency, then, shouldn't deter me?" he asked, the quizzical smile no longer a little one, no longer a half.

"Not after that, Nick. It hasn't deterred me, has it?"

"No," he agreed, "and I'm only too willing to follow your tempting example. Will you marry me, Camilla, when the year is up?"

"I'll marry you to-morrow, my dear, and show the world how I cherish my late husband's memory."

But they weren't married to-morrow. They weren't married for ten days. Then Hilda came back from Newport for the wedding as beaming as though her life had never touched the edge of tragedy and with a confidential tale of romance for her uncle-guardian about a young attaché of the British embassy whom she had met and loved. He had gone home, now, she said, to fight. But when the war was over he was coming back to marry her. So very, very brief is youth's memory.

And Nick's friend, Burnham, came up too, by special invitation. It was a very quiet affair and the guests limited to a handful. They had hardly seen each other since that May night, and this certainly was not an occasion to discuss the grim affair in which each had played a part. Still there were one or two questions which the natty, young-looking, little physician couldn't quite resist asking.

"I've so often wondered," he said, "about that vanity case. You said, if I remember, that it appeared familiar. Just between us two, did you ever get any nearer to identifying it?"

And Van Ness, believing that in a case that had been so much lied about, one little prevarication wouldn't very much matter, answered:

"Oh, yes. It resembled one my sister used to carry. But when they were placed together they were as different as swan and goose."

"Dear, dear!" the doctor exclaimed. "*Some* mystery, as they say. I don't suppose it will ever be solved now."

Van Ness shook his head gravely. "No, I presume not. It's already pretty well gone into the limbo of forgotten things. Let it rest, Henry. Let it rest."

THE SURRENDER

By L. M. Hussey

I

SHE had no knowledge, in the scientific sense, of poisons, and when she determined to end her life by one she took the first toxic drug that came to her hand. This happened to be a little bottle of chloral, and imprinted on the label was the skull above the crossed bones with a warning word in large red letters.

For a few moments she twisted the vial back and forth in her fingers, wondering how much of the drug to take. But this was a trivial speculation, and finally she emptied all the white crystals into a glass and poured a small volume of water upon them. They dissolved rapidly, and the fluid remained clear, as if it were no more deadly than the water itself.

She raised the brim of the glass to her lips and a slight chlorinous smell came to her nostrils, and this was pleasant to her. Then with the sudden resolution of such moments, she swallowed the solution. It had a curious, benumbing taste. There was no other sensation. Through her little window, the afternoon sunlight came in with a warm exuberance, covering her head, her face, her shoulders, as in a mantle of gilt, extraordinarily diaphanous.

She stood quietly near the window, her fingers still circled around the glass. Now she was happy at last; her mind was exalted; this was her moment of victory! The cruelty of life, the unremittent harshness of her days, almost personified to her senses in an unseen but fully apprehended presence, was ended, gone and destroyed in a single swift act of her own accomplishment, like the sudden triumphant thrust of a duellist. She was deeply glad that the properties of the drug left her these strange moments of delight when, removed from all the concerns of life, she still had the sensations of living.

She turned her face to the window, and the sun warmed her cheeks like an ardent touch. Now she felt that her small room was an inadequate place for her end. She crossed the room and went out the door, with the idea that she could walk to the park and have the final unconsciousness reach her in the open air, under the shadows of the green trees.

She went down the stairs rapidly, but when she reached the door her sight seemed very dim. She groped for the knob. It surprised her that the touch of the metal was so faint on her fingers. She wanted to close the door after her, but an acutely felt urgency, a clear knowledge that the time left her was very brief, led her to neglect. The pavement felt soft, yielding to her step, as if she were walking through a deep layer of feathers. The sun disappeared unexpectedly. She looked up . . . she wondered, apprehensive, if it was about to rain. . . .

A physician, driving his car slowly through the narrow street, saw her fall. He slipped out his clutch at once, and jolted his car to a stop with the emergency brake. Two or three children near her ceased a shrill squabble and like little pieces of dirty marble stood motionless and stared.

The doctor reached her where she lay on the pavement; he knelt down at her side and lifted her head in his hands. Her hair was loosened and a

black strand fell over his wrists, as if, in that instant, strangely animate. Her eyes were closed, her lips were parted, the bloodless pallor of her face was apparent through the warm dusk of her skin.

He bent closer, examining her face. He could feel, against his supporting arm, the faint rise and fall of her continued respiration. Now, in the intimacy of his examination, he drew near enough to detect a slight chlorinous odour that arose, like a miasma, from her parted lips.

At once, as if he were inspired, he suspected poison, and the nature of it. He gave a quick glance about him. No one was on the street. The group of dirty children swayed a little forward, gaping.

He stood up quickly, drawing her with him, his hands passed under her arms. It was the moment for a quick decision and he made this in that necessary second. He lifted her in his arms and carried her to the car.

With some difficulty he raised her inanimate body high enough to lay her on the seat. Then, throwing a robe over her, he slipped under the wheel and started the engine.

He passed into motion slowly, looking back every second to see if the jolting of the uneven streets endangered her position. She was without any movement; there were no signs of her breathing. He did not know whether she was alive or dead.

It was not a great distance, but the trip to his office seemed very long. The bloodless face of the girl, her pathetic insensibility, her helplessness stirred his pity, whilst her foreign aspect, her black hair, the black fringe of her closed eyes, her strange collapse brought him a deep curiosity. At last he turned the corner into his own street. He stopped before the door of his office and, lifting her out of the car, carried her up the steps and into the house. His housekeeper met him in the hall.

"This girl is very sick," he said. "Help me carry her upstairs."

She was small and light and they had no difficulty now in taking her into a little bedroom on the second floor. As they placed her on the bed her head turned to the side, and her loosened hair spread out over the pillow in jetty disorder.

"Hurry, now!" commanded the doctor. "Get me a glass; fill it half full of hot water."

The housekeeper left the room and during her short absence he administered a cardiac stimulant. The woman returned with the water and he hastily dissolved a quantity of the necessary alkaline antidote. He raised her head in the curve of his arm and poured the liquid through her parted lips.

For a moment her tongue refused to respond. Then she swallowed; the antidote was given.

Her head fell back on the pillow. With his fingers on her wrist, he felt a more perceptible pulse.

After a few minutes it seemed to him that the tinge of a colour was entering her cheeks.

II

WHEN she first opened her eyes she saw a man looking at her. His regard seemed kind, and very concerned and his presence did not worry her. She perceived that he was not young; his eyes were surrounded by small lines, modelled there by the years; his hair was grey. Yet this was very curious—she could not understand his nearness, his look of concern, his obvious interest in her.

For a few seconds she made a definite struggle for comprehension. But she was immensely drowsy; her senses demanded sleep with an imperative desire. She closed her eyes again; once more she was without consciousness.

A dozen times, through a period of which she had no reckoning—minutes, hours, days; she did not know—she awakened in the same way, experienced the same wonder, returned to unconsciousness with the same resistless urge. Sometimes she found this man looking at her as in the first awakening;

again she was alone in the small room, lying in bed. Once there was a woman in the room who said something to her, but her mind was too flaccid to comprehend the words.

One morning she opened her eyes, and now, for the first time since her initial loss of consciousness, she was aware of life, aware of her pulse, of her breathing, of the touch of the sheets against her flexed fingers. With a tremendous surprise she realized that she had bridged a gap of time, she did not know how long, in a condition of stupor, that left no memories. She vividly recalled her last definite act—passing down the steps of the house and out to the street. She had intended to die then! What had happened to her?

She lay in the bed weakly, puzzled, wondering.

After a few moments the woman she had seen before entered, glanced at her, turned away suddenly and passed out into the corridor.

A moment after the man observed vaguely at other times came into the room and approached her bed. He bent over her and took her wrist between his fingers.

"You feel better?" he asked her.

She looked at him earnestly, wondering whether, outside that room, she had ever seen him before. She felt certain that he was a stranger.

"Who are you?" she asked.

He smiled, dropped her hand, and drew a chair close to the bedside.

"Don't try to ask me everything at once," he said. "You have been very sick."

Then the consciousness of her own act came back to her clearly. It seemed certain that he must know.

"What are you going to do with me?" she asked.

Her voice was hard, almost hostile. Her English was delivered quickly, with a Latin accent. He ignored her hostility and continued to smile at her.

"I don't know just what you mean," he said. "For one thing, I'm going to keep you here until you get well. Also I want to find out what happened to you. If anyone is to blame—"

"Ah!"

The passionate exclamation broke in upon his sentence with a startling fervour; it passed over her lips in a monosyllable of sound that seemed to imply profound significances—hate, venom, disaster, memories of infinite distress.

The dark pupils of her eyes expanded and she stared at him as if his substance were transparent, revealing through its medium figures of malignity that stirred her mind to bitterness and despair.

He moved a little closer to her, and touched one of her white, flaccid hands.

"Tell me," he said, "what happened to you? Did you take the drug? Why did you do it? I was driving down the street in my car when I saw you come out of the house. You staggered near the steps and then collapsed. I was just returning from several calls. I brought you here and I've managed to save your life. Either you took less of the drug than would be quickly fatal, or else you have a very strong resistance. Have you anything to tell me? Don't—don't imagine I want to press you. But if there is something I can do for you . . . any reason . . . any help . . ."

She was searching his face eagerly, curiously, as if some singularity of his features made them, in a measure, the objects of wonder. After a moment she turned her head to the side and closed her eyes.

"This is very strange," she murmured.

And then, with a detached tone, almost in the manner of some casual pronouncement, she added: "You must know, I am not used to kindness. . . ."

A few moments passed and she began to talk about herself. He listened to her almost in silence, only occasionally interrupting her with a simple question. Sometimes she spoke with difficulty, finding expression awkward in an alien speech. More often her sentences were quick and voluble.

III

Her father had been a tradesman in a town in the south of France. She had no memory of her mother, whose death had occurred before her second year. When her father died also there was a little money left—enough for a few years.

"Do you know what I wanted?" she asked.

The doctor gave her a look of inquiry.

"Well, you have to know," she said, "that what I wanted was a man!"

She made the naïve statement belligerently, and with an immense seriousness. In that moment the doctor, attending her words, felt in her a fundamental simplicity, touching like that of a child. Her desires had the directness of elemental passions. He saw, foreshadowed in her introductory words, the sardonic comment life would make, in the realities it brought to her, upon the simplicity of her aspirations and her dreams. He spoke to her softly.

"Then tell me," he said, "what did you do to achieve your wish?"

In a gross sense hers was a desire of easy gratification. In that little town where she lived she had, after the death of her father, more than the ordinary dowry. Any young fellow would have married her, but, for the purposes of her content, she was unfortunate, unfortunate in the quality of her spirit. She had the unlucky gift of imagination and the power to make dreams in her head. And in her naïve imaginings she had a naïve faith.

None of the young men she knew in this place aroused any sense of appeal. For her they were uncouth; their hopes were trivial. She told of a dissatisfied year in which her discontent increased, little by little, accumulating, like hoarded small sums, into a store of memories, undesirable and inconsequent. At last she thought of leaving her home and going to Paris.

But the romance of this prospected adventure never became an accomplishment. What seemed to be the promise of her wishes came with suddenness and fervour.

"You never saw him," she said, "but I will tell you what he was like. You have to know, I had bought six candles one morning to be lit for my prayers. When I came out of the church he was standing near the door, smoking white cigarettes.

"Yes, and he had an air—nothing like those poor fellows that wanted me. He was blond—I knew he must be from the north of my country, and he was very sure of himself. He looked at me and I was so surprised I gave him more than just a glance. Then, you know, of course he smiled."

It seemed he was the nephew of the local tax-collector, making his uncle a visit before crossing the ocean. He was going to America; he had people there, he said, and there was a lot of money to be made. He expected to stay with his uncle for two or three days, but as it turned out he remained nearly a month, because he and the girl became lovers.

She spoke of her lover with a sombre enthusiasm as if, recalling luminous memories, she filtered them through a gloomy medium of other recollections, remembered from subsequent days.

Listening to her, to the appeal of her full confidence, the doctor tried to picture the qualities of the young Frenchman who had given this girl her vision of achieved hopes. What gifts did he give her to light the fire of her fervour; what was his difference? The reply came, accompanied by his inner sense of her pathos: nothing, nothing marked, nothing essential. There was no surprise for him in this conclusion. The tragedies of life come out of trivialities; even the tragedies themselves, the complexes of hopes and aspirations, of dreams and visions are trivial. . . .

Finally, the young Frenchman left. He told her he would write to her as soon as he landed, and he kept this promise. He wrote to her very frequently and she returned him abundant replies. He said he wanted her to join him at the earliest moment—just the

instant he had his proper bearings and a definite programme under way. This disappointed her a little and made her somewhat impatient. She was not in sympathy with his caution; she was eager to share his difficulties.

They corresponded for a year, but still it was not yet the suitable time for her coming. Her impatience had accumulated and she made a resolve.

"This is what I told to myself," she said: "'You are not going to wait any longer, you little fool! Just take him by surprise and go to him. He will be glad enough, you can count on that, after he has you.' Ah! And you can't tell me I was wrong!"

She wrote to him that she was coming, and then she took the next liner. During the trip her precipitancy worried her a little; she was troubled by minor perturbations: perhaps he would not meet the steamer . . . it might be her letter failed to reach him. . . . But these disturbing suppositions proved wrong.

He met her as she walked ashore; he took her in his arms. There was the clangorous noise of the streets about them, the smell of the salt water blown over the docks, the dust and the drifting smoke of the city embracing them like an unwelcome mantle. But his lips revived the memories of their initial hours and their first kisses and brought her an oblivion of delight.

Then, as they walked away together, she had an opportunity to examine him and with an intense surprise she perceived that he was different. It was not so much a change in appearance that she noted as, expressed through the small alterations of his face, his gestures, his walk, even the clothes he wore, a declination of spirit, a diminution of his courage, a decay of his assurance.

His former air of blitheness was scarcely perceptible. And after all these months of separation, when there should have been an immense eagerness for conversation between them, she found it difficult to talk to him; he fell into silences, into preoccupations.

It was necessary to arrange some place for her to live, until they could be together. She did not see why they should not join each other at once, why the abandon of his desire should not prove adequate to the surmounting of all the difficulties that opposed such a course. But she acquiesced in the plan he set forth and they searched together for a place for her to stay. They could not find any until evening and then he left her, with the promise to see her again early in the morning. She watched him go with a curious premonition in her heart.

And he never returned. . . .

There was no way she could find him, no way to inquire about him. She knew nothing about his employment, nor the place where he had been living. All her letters had been addressed to the general delivery. His disappearance was utter and complete, like the fading of a phantom, like the passing of a dream.

But she could not believe in the finality of his going.

What had happened to him?

Had he, in the interval of their separation, lost his desire of her, without the courage of confession?

Or was he the victim of some obscure misfortune, some incomprehensible disaster?

He disappeared as men disappear every day; he went without a word, and was never seen again. She might wonder and postulate upon his going, but the fact itself was an insoluble mystery, one of the mysteries that give to the aspect of life its sinister and inscrutable countenance.

Since she knew nothing definite, her hopes remained with her for many months. But even these grew less and less with the passing of time that brought her nothing. The strange city, the strange people, the hostility of an alien race, gave her at last the sense of utter isolation.

She chose finally that simple solution that was in consonance with the naïveté of her aspirations, with the simplicity of her hopes. The unforeseen interven-

tion of the man who listened to her now had saved her.

IV

In the days that followed she sought to comprehend the character of this physician who kept her in his home and ministered to her helplessness. Her recovery was not easy; all strength and all desire seemed to have passed from her body.

She spent the hours of each day lying in the bed, motionless, in a nirvana of inanition. When he came in to talk with her she watched his face, she studied his features. When he left, the lineaments of his countenance remained before her, like a puzzle. He was not young; his dark hair was chiefly lightened with grey. But his face, if not youthful, had something of the aspect of youth; the skin was smooth, like that of a boy, with a resemblance to that indefinable air of hope that expresses itself in even the texture of a boy's face. He always spoke to her quietly; his eyes looked at her with kindness.

He had an acute appreciation of her pathos, perhaps because he found in her a similarity to himself; he had had simple hopes. He admired her courage, and the directness of her resolution. When he talked to her he felt a deep sense of pleasure; the little details of her conversation charmed him. He liked the fervid delivery of her speech, the quaint pronunciation of the words she said, the glow of her dark eyes, the occasional quick gesture that charged her inanimate fingers with life. Whenever he could spare the time he talked to her.

At last she was able to sit up. He had an easy chair brought in and placed near the window; here she sat and looked out over the roofs of the houses.

One day, as he seated himself to talk to her, she watched his face closely, as if listening, and then, at some question he asked, she uttered a quick interrogation.

"Eh?"

He smiled at her.

"You weren't hearing me at all, were you?" he said.

For a moment she made no answer and then, knitting her jet brows, she began to question him.

"Tell me, why do you keep me here? Why are you kind to me? You don't know me! Nobody does anything like this. I have to tell you, I think you are very strange!"

"Isn't it my business to make people well?"

"Ah! Don't tell me these things. You just go around what I ask you."

He laughed a little.

"Well, then, what do you want to know?"

"Why I am here! Why you interfered with me! You know, you had no business to pick me up and bring me to this house; you spoiled my plans. Do you see that?"

She spoke harshly, and her words chilled him. She seemed to withdraw from his sympathy, to erect a barrier between herself and his desire to help her.

The discomfort of the moment was expressed in his face, and perceiving his altered expression, she put out her hand and touched him, retracting by this gesture the austerity of her words.

He was not used to such a touch; his life had given him few pleasant memories of women. Her young skin warmed against his own, communicating a warmth to his veins as if the simple contact of her hand mixed his blood with an infusion of youth.

He closed his fingers around her hand, and she did not withdraw it; it remained in his own, intimate and languid. She did not look at him now, but turning her head to the side, leaning her cheek against the cushions of the chair, she closed her eyes. Her acquiescence to his touch, her languor and her weakness aroused in him a profound sense of protection and the promise of an endearing intimacy for which he had long ceased to hope.

In that moment his mind was filled with suddenly born aspirations that were not yet shaped into the coherence

of definite thoughts. He looked at the girl, turned side-face to his eyes, and the curve of her dark cheek, the drooping lines of her lips, the languid flexion of her small throat made her precious to his prospected hours. She brought him the assurance of a magic gift; she retrieved for him the glow of his departed youth. Continuing to look at her, the resignation and helplessness of her attitude produced within him a deep determination, a matured sense of necessity: he must not let her go!

Her strength continued to come back slowly, and it was many days before she was able, for exercise, to walk up and down the length of the hall.

During this period the doctor spent a certain number of hours with her each day, taking pleasure in listening to her speech, in asking her questions about her home and her former life, in prevailing upon her to talk of herself. He found a charm simply in the quality of her voice and the manner in which she formed the sentence of a language that was not her own.

Sometimes, when her speech became inextricably snarled with foreign idiom, he stopped the flow of her words by a laugh and then, after a second, she understood and laughed with him.

"What I care!" she would exclaim, smiling. "But if I could talk to you in my own language, you must believe me, I would have plenty to say and a good many words!"

He had now the luxury of little intimacies with her. She accepted his hesitant caresses without responding, but with never a denial. When he took her hand her slim fingers lay in his palm like the long petals of flowers, half wilted.

She recognized the affection she had aroused in him. It did not surprise her; she accepted it as one might a natural phenomenon. He gave her no thrill, he gave her no dreams, there was no magic in his presence. For her he was an old man who had been kind to her. She ceased even to find his kindness curious and to wonder at it; she accepted this too. Her mind was flaccid, but at least she was not troubled, she was calm, she felt secure. She waited, with the resignation of a *dévote*, for his purpose and his avowal.

One day he told her she was strong enough to go out now, and proposed a ride in his car. He helped her downstairs with his arm supporting her and he almost lifted her into the car. The summer had passed into autumn; there was a tree with red leaves in front of the house. She remembered the days of the falling leaves in the little town where she had been born and there was a melancholy and a regret in her heart.

But the cool air exhilarated her and colour came into her cheeks, flushing her dark skin. They drove out to the park and the doctor stopped his car along the side of a quiet drive. He looked at his companion and saw the warm colour in her face.

"You look better!" he exclaimed.

"I feel much stronger."

"Yes, you'll be entirely well very soon now. It is time to make some plans. . . ."

"What you mean?"

"Dear," he said, "it is true, I suppose, that I cannot give you what you have hoped for or expected. But then, we never get what we expect. Perhaps I can give you other things that will be some recompense. I want to protect you, I want to keep you from trouble. . . . I want you to marry me. . . ."

There was no surprise in his words; they had been fully anticipated. Yet her acquiescence did not come to her lips at once in the easy assent she had imagined.

For an instant she closed her eyes and unexpectedly the vision of her hopes returned to her, the naïve and simple promise of her life. It came like a passing breath, like a remembered perfume, like the far-heard melody of a song; it vanished; she answered him.

"Yes," she said.

V

They went home, and he left her in her room. He promised to return in

a few hours; he parted from her jubilantly.

She sat down on the edge of the bed. The light was fading, the room was dusk. The window was a dim rectangle, a palely luminous square set in the dark wall. For a few moments she thought, tenderly, of the man who had just left her, and was grateful for his kindness.

And then with the vision of his face that was not young before her eyes, with the knowledge of his age and his inadequacy, she experienced a revolt passionate and sudden. She stood up from the bed instantly, she turned around, she stumbled backward a few paces in a panic alarm, as a waking somnambulist might from the proximity of a grave danger. In that instant she saw the impossible promise she had made him, the incredible abandon of her most fervid hopes. In another moment she was assured of a profound necessity for escape.

She turned to the bed and found her hat; she placed it on her head with fumbling haste. She ran out of the room noiselessly, down the stairs, through the hall, out the front door. As she half ran along the street the evening air blew sharply against her cheeks. She nearly collided with a man turning the corner; he stopped and stared after her.

She came to a more crowded street and out of breath, slackened the hurry of her pace. The store windows were lighted; boys were calling newspapers at the corners. She moved through the crowds alone, without a goal. And at last the reaction to her sudden effort came and she paused, leaning against a store window, immensely tired.

Men and women passed her endlessly, like a panorama of automatons; she knew no one. She had no share in their purposes, no knowledge of their intents. The noises of the streets, the murmur of a strange tongue, the clatter of vehicles, the mingled cacophonous voices of warning automobile horns assailed her ears harshly, beat upon her consciousness like an inimical presence. She leaned against the store window, isolated in a great loneliness.

And then, with the same suddenness of her emotional revolt, came her fear. The separate aspects of the life about her, the passing crowds, the lighted windows, the shuffling of footfalls, the sinister clamour of the streets, personified themselves into a monster that blindly sought her destruction. She breathed sharply and stepped away from the window. Her strength returned to her, the strength of a last effort, and she hurried back the way she had come.

She reached her street and the house from which she had made her escape. She went up the steps and opened the door. The doctor was in the hall; he greeted her with a gasp of consternation and relief. She saw the intense alarm of his features; he looked older, very old!

"Why did you go out?" he cried. "Why did you risk that? I've been half crazy with anxiety! What was the matter?"

She did not answer him, but limply stumbled against him, into his protective embrace, making the surrender of her romantic hopes to the tenderness of his inadequate arms.

BEING in love, like eating sausage, requires perfect confidence.

THE OTHER WOMEN

By Lillian Foster Barrett

I

MARGUERITA was virtuous in that the majority of the virtues were undoubtedly hers. The fact that the one she was least regardful of was the very one that plays the title rôle and gives its generic name to all the rest is negligible in these days of sketchy morality. Marguerita had never been guilty of theft; Marguerita had never taken the name of the Lord her God in vain; she had never coveted her neighbour's wife, or his ox, or his ass. As to wives—more later. And if she had allowed herself a too frank affair of the heart now and then, let it be said as an extenuating circumstance (if such a situation needs extenuation) that she played her game with a nice observance of all points of honour.

For instance, she was faithful—blindly, consistently, absurdly faithful. Her fidelity, however, was not without its complicating element, for it worked to a demand for faithfulness on the part of others. This, in turn, when not duly met, worked to jealousy. A jealousy of right, and Marguerita was capable of being as blindly, consistently, absurdly jealous as ever she was faithful.

There was the matter of Stanley Wright. Everybody knew Stanley was devoted to Marguerita, madly devoted, as devotion goes on the Stock Exchange. But there had been a wife some twenty years before; and in Marguerita's sensitive soul the shadow of that bride of yesterday played havoc. She thought of Stanley in his first bloom, slender, supple, ardent in his lovemaking; and the Stanley she knew seemed dull and heavy by comparison.

"How old are you, Stanley?" she asked irrelevantly one day.

"Forty-seven!" came the answer promptly. A man doesn't have to hedge when his fortune is a matter of note.

Forty-seven! Marguerita turned away to hide her tears. How cruelly the other woman had scored! Her protest was against time and tide and fate, but primarily against other women. Other women! There were dozens of them, here, there, everywhere, lurking in the cafés, on the streets, in her own imagination, but, worst of all, in the memories of the men themselves. Sweethearts, wives, mistresses, a long procession to torment her. Poor Marguerita, out of senseless nothing could she provoke a conscious something to be jealous of.

Her jealousy had driven the stalwart Stanley from her side, the young Preston boy, Warren Gates. So, at thirty, Marguerita could truly say there had been in her life only lovers and women to be jealous of. She was unhappy, wretchedly unhappy; "It's because I idealize love and no man can understand," she told herself.

It was at a dinner given by the artist Shelby that Marguerita was to meet the man who *did* understand. She had gone to the dinner, beautiful, drooping, in an exquisite creation of a gown that fostered the illusion of her disillusion. She was pensive, indifferent. The man on one side of her talked politics; the man on the other, horses. The man directly across was too drunk to talk at all. The women? Yes, there were women to fill in, but Marguerita failed to notice them. She fell into a daze.

Then it was that a voice penetrated her stupor, a voice subtle, shaded, arguing gracefully.

"But you don't understand here in America. It's what we call in northern Europe—"

Marguerita was never able, as she recalled the scene afterwards, to think of just what it was they *did* call it in northern Europe. Yonana, or Yohana, something of the sort, beautiful and suggestive. The more beautiful and suggestive for the voice that enunciated it.

"It is not what you call love, here in America," the voice went on. "It is a thing neither of the intellect nor of the emotions. It is not platonicism; it is not passion. It is a glorious blend that makes for the perfect relation."

Marguerita's heart began to pound. So excited was she that she did not dare to raise her eyes to this man, this prophet as it were, who had come out of the wilderness to cry a doctrine she had been waiting for a long time and passionately to hear. That the man was a foreigner she knew from the peculiar musical timbre of his tones, from his strange enunciation. She was afraid to look at him lest she be disappointed. But he was still speaking.

"Ah—but you can't understand." His voice had become bantering. "You are too, too unimaginative! No, nor you, nor you." He was obviously being appealed to in all directions. Marguerita felt, somehow, that his attention was about to stray to her, and with a supreme effort she raised her eyes.

He was there for her that first second of quick exchange, as intensely as he was to be there for her in the months that followed. Big, brown and tender, he seemed of a Viking strength, yet of infinite sympathy and subtle understanding. His grey eyes held hers a wonderful moment. Then,

"*You* could understand," he said so softly the words failed almost of utterance.

"Yes," she whispered back, "I think I could."

However, as Marguerita thought about it all that night, with a delightful flutter of pulse, she convinced herself they had actually said nothing, that their understanding was an occult, telepathic thing. They two of all that goodly company had been picked in exemplification of that perfect relation, called—*was* it yonana or yohana? Marguerita could only wait and hope, but she went about with an exalted look in her eyes as of one destined for a high mission. He, Mr. Eric Lundestad, as she discovered him to be, had left as soon as the dinner was over.

"Business!" he had pleaded.

"A woman, of course!" Shelby had unkindly whispered in Marguerita's ear. It was evidence of Marguerita's new vision that the words struck no jealous chord in her heart.

Marguerita came to learn a surprising amount about Mr. Eric Lundestad in the days when she waited for him to make his second appearance on the scene of action. It was as if each tea, each party she attended was not complete without the quota of gossip in connection with him. The women, in particular, were very vivacious on the subject.

"A perfect type! Such a profile! Such eyes!"

"And *such* ideas!"

"But what is he?"

"A beloved vagabond!" It could, in short, be all summed up in that. He had lived here, there, everywhere, the world his playground. Five years in Ceylon, two in Yokohama, Buenos Aires, Jamaica—he was incapable of taking root, that was it. He was unidentified with any country and so with any convention or custom. He was a free spirit, free as the wind.

It was beautiful. Each time his name was mentioned, even by a woman, Marguerita thrilled anew to the message she had surprised in his wonderful eyes. Two weeks passed since Shelby's dinner. He was giving her time to prepare herself. Three weeks passed; she began to wonder.

Then one day as she was taking a walk in Fifth Avenue she had met him.

She had seen him coming half a block away, his bronzed face above the heads of the mediocre crowd, and he had seen her. He had taken off his hat and they had shaken hands. The crowd parted about them. Women looked back—what wonder? For indeed Mr. Eric Lundestad was a perfect specimen of man at the height of virile manhood.

Marguerita felt a great pride of possession as she said,

"I was just going home. Will you join me in a cup of tea?"

He had taken the proposal quite naturally. Evidently he, too, had spent the weeks in preparation and was ready. He smiled down at her. Marguerita drew a quick breath; it was all so ecstatic and yet so quiet and peaceful. A refinement of emotion that she had often dreamed of, a quintessence of content!

They had gone home to dim lights, a smouldering fire; and they had drunk tea, their eyes alert over the tea cups. They talked of books, of music. He would break ever and again into his native Norse, into French, German. Even Latin, beautiful, ecclesiastical Latin, he had ready to use. Marguerita could only marvel.

So it was that the kiss, that came inevitably with the waning light, seemed to Marguerita of the nature of a boon from heaven. He had drawn her close to him and closer; she could only shut her eyes and wonder that such joy could be. Yonana—or was it Yohana? Something that is neither of the intellect nor of the passions! He kissed her again. Something—the perfect love it is—you people in America can never understand. He kissed her a third time and found her cheeks wet with tears.

"My darling!" he cried in protest.

But she could only sob out her happiness and her unworthiness.

Yonana—or Yohana! It was all so great and wonderful, and she seemed so little and insignificant to be chosen!

II

THERE followed for Marguerita a month of perfect happiness, undisturbed by doubt of any kind. She kept herself in isolation lest vulgar contacts mar the beauty of her new experience. It was as if she, too, were seeking to detach herself from people, from the world, seeking to be of those who breathe the rarer ether of the spiritual and acknowledge no ties of the mundane.

Marguerita, it must be admitted, was romantic. The myth of Cupid and Psyche had always appealed to her as the most artistic and graceful of old lore. *There* was an *affaire*, indeed, of the finest subtlety and nicest shading. The arrangement was so neat; Cupid so delicate. Marguerita had even gone so far, in her appreciation of the chiaroscuro of such a relation, as to write a pōem on the subject, after the style of Swinburne. Marguerita always turned to poetry, after the style of Swinburne, during periods of emotional stress.

So it was that Marguerita took a certain pride now in knowing *nothing* of Mr. Eric Lundestad. Definite detail, such as street address or telephone number, would have constituted a stain on the white radiance of their understanding. He came, not too frequently, and went at will. Marguerita found the uncertainty of it all blissful. She was in her sunroom, delightfully costumed, waiting for him if he cared to drop in mornings. There was always hot coffee to be procured from somewhere, a variety of newspapers to afford dreamy discussion. She was in her drawing room, late afternoon, pensively costumed, drooping and wiliowy over the tea table. Then there were the evenings when diaphanously clad, she waited and wondered with a quicker sparkle in her blue eyes. Had he come too often the charm might have been dispelled; but, as it was, their talks seemed the more satisfying, their kisses the more ardent, for their infrequency.

Marguerita rested content.

"It's because our relation is a *big* one," she said to herself, "that I have outgrown the pettiness of jealousy."

She could find it in her heart almost

to be sorry for Stanley and Preston and Warren Gates. After all, they had been too *little* to understand.

A month passed, five weeks, six. Then it was Marguerita discovered by an absurd, hackneyed little incident, that in this world, essentially a world of bonds and ties and conventions, complete detachment and isolation are impossible. How often a hair divides the false and true! And it was just a hair, a long dark, sleek, treacherous looking hair, surprised on Mr. Eric Lundestad's coat, that awoke Marguerita from her happy dream. The old jealousy flared up, wild, violent, unreasoning, and Marguerita came to realize that, as she had never known real love before, she most certainly had never known real jealousy.

She was miserable; she was wretched. She talked, she argued; she wept. The days Eric spent away from her took on a new significance now. His nomadic career tore at her heart. Yokohama, Jamaica, South America meant now just so many women. She could see him, eager, ardent, making tropical love under tropical skies, with a tropical sweetheart in his wonderful arms. She could see him, his noble head bared to northern breezes, protesting with Viking vigour to some woman of his own race all those hundreds of things he knew how to protest so well. She could see him in his Yokohama home under that wistaria arbour he had talked of so dreamily, with a painted Japanese doll to play with.

It was awful; it was terrible. But most horrible, most gripping, was the vision her overwrought brain conjured up of the women, dozens of them, who were sharing his life now as she was sharing it. She pictured other morning rooms, other dinner tables, other firesides, and, most harrowing of all, other costumes that outshone hers in artistic delicacy. Ah! how miserable she was! But there was born of her misery a high resolve, not without its element of the martyr's ecstasy, to win him entirely from those other creatures whose shadows hovered deep in the depths of his tantalizing eyes as they looked into hers.

She made dramatic scenes at first.

"Ah, the other women, the other women!" she would cry and catch her breath in a curious little sob.

"But, my dear, what *can* the other women matter now?" Eric would answer a little wearily. "You are the only one at present, you—"

Then she would throw her arms about his neck passionately and try to force him to new declarations of his love.

"Why me?" she would persist, her cheek soft against his.

"You are, or you have been, so, so restful;" he said reflectively.

Then, seeing that did not quite suit, he seized her hands as she fell away from him and held her as he smiled his quizzical little smile.

"Yonana!" he murmured softly and she melted again to his embrace.

Yes, she would *win* him from those others. So Marguerita determined and set about a course of action, warranted to bring about the coveted end. She instituted dinners here, there, everywhere. They did things brilliantly, went to the opera, took motor trips. She exacted more and more of her lover's time, and very soon began to glory in the image of those other women, waiting, waiting in vain. There was an element of the cruel in her nature that she had never suspected before. She was ruthless.

"And why not Friday night?" she would persist, her eyes hard as she watched him vacillate.

"But, my dear, I am *tired!*" Eric would say, almost plaintively. "A good night's rest—"

"The opera is refreshing," she would say. "I shall order the tickets. Oh—and—er—Shelby wants us for dinner on Saturday."

"But—"

"Come here for tea first; we can go on later."

They were always going on later, a dance, a supper, rushing about, dining extravagantly, meeting in lobbies. Mar-

guerita wore dozens of beautiful gowns.

"I liked it better," Eric sighed wearily one night, "when you and I were seeing only each other."

Marguerita looked wise. "Seeing each other—yes—but how often?"

Eric had shrugged good-naturedly. "Twice a week," he said.

"Exactly!" Marguerita's voice was a little sharp. He saw her discomfiture.

"But, my dear, how can I make you understand? I am, as you say in English, getting middle-aged. This rushing about is too much for me."

She laughed at that as she took in quite thoroughly the wonderful vigour of his figure, lounging so gracefully in a fireside chair, the bronzed strength of his fine head, the warm depth of his grey eyes. She laughed at the absurdity of his words and then stopped his protest with a kiss.

Perhaps it was that Marguerita suspected some of the women of her own set that she flaunted so openly her connection with Eric. A month of continuous dissipation, however, and she realized that, whoever the other women, her triumph over them was a complete and signal one. It was almost in a sense of being able to gloat that Marguerita had dropped in at a tea one afternoon at Lina Chadwick's. She knew, perfectly, the sort of gathering it would be, a dozen women, each ready with her little quota of gossip, a few men to ease the strain of feminine boredom.

Jack Harding was there and came at once to Marguerita's side.

"The first time I have been able to get you alone for weeks," he murmured sentimentally. There happened to be a lull in conversation at that particular moment so everybody heard.

Conversation took a fresh spurt, the Lundestad man the point of departure.

"After all, people are so little subtle." Marguerita thought and settled down comfortably to listen.

"Billy says—" Marie Winton prefaced every remark with something of the sort, "that Lundestad's settled down and is doing wonders in the business. It's shipping, isn't it?"

She referred to Marguerita gracefully.

Marguerita sat up stiffly.

"I didn't know he even *was* in business," she said, a certain tartness in her soft voice. "After all, there's something vulgar about *all* business," and she dismissed the subject and turned to converse in undertones with Jack. But she could not help but follow the trend of conversation.

"Billy says—" Marie went on, put on her mettle by Marguerita's indifference, "that it's quite remarkable. Lundestad's moved to Brooklyn—"

Marguerita winced.

"So as to be near the docks. Gets up at four every morning and, up to the last few weeks, never went out except a night or an afternoon and then—"

"But, *my dear*," Lili Woodward was aghast. "You mean he's given up his *affaires?*"

"Absolutely." Marie was decisive.

Two or three other young married women rushed in to the general commendation of such a policy of renunciation and reform.

"Marguerita, are you responsible for his reclamation?" Lina Chadwick asked slyly.

"Certainly not!" answered Marguerita, forced into the discussion in spite of herself.

"Well, don't give Lundestad too much credit for picking himself up," came from Willard Densher. "I'll tell you what's the trouble—' He stirred his tea deliberately and waited till all attention was focussed quite intensely upon him. Then he brought out what he had to say with all dramatic effect.

"Lundestad is growing old."

Marguerita never knew how she got home. White, faint, sick at heart, disillusioned, she had staggered to her motor. She had gone home to a night of the wildest protest and despairing grief. Now, it was because there *were* no other women that jealousy racked her. The brilliant images she had conjured up to triumph over were as dust.

Life resolved itself into the dreariest monotony.

Middle-age! Middle-age!

She recalled the weariness in Eric's voice as he had said, "But don't you see? I am so *tired*, dear." She had judged it then the subtlest strategy; she saw it now simply as dun truth. And he had chosen *her* as the love of his middle-age; in that lay the sharpest sting.

He had come to her the next evening in all trusting faith; her strange silence, the tense dramatic look in her eyes pointed something amiss.

"That damned jealousy again!" he said to himself and sought to allay it by tenderness. He tried to take her in his arms, but she drew away.

"Where have you been—the last two days?" she managed to falter.

So he tried to explain. "I have been working hard, so I went home and to bed after dinner."

That was enough. Marguerita burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping. He had forcefully taken her into his arms.

"Darling, you must understand; there is no one but you—"

She had shown signs of hysteria.

Good God? What could he do? Had someone been gossiping? Or—that damned hair again!

"Listen," he cried, this time more firmly. "You have no proof— That hair—it must have been I picked it up in the Subway."

Poor Marguerita! Not even the illusion of that hair was to be left her. The storm had broken. Subway, Brooklyn, business, middle-age; she could only throw herself on the divan in the immense despair that fastened upon her and sob great big sobs that shivered up from her inmost being.

So it went for a week. Eric tried everything in his power to comfort her. However, the more he protested his devotion and fidelity, the more difficult she was to handle. Even Yohana—or was it Yonana?—failed of its charm.

One evening he had arrived to find Marguerita quite calm. He breathed a sigh of relief; the thing had been getting intolerable. She smiled a little twisted smile up at him.

"Sit down," she said, "I want to talk."

He obeyed.

"I have been unreasonable," she began.

"Oh, no!" he murmured weakly.

"Don't interrupt!" she said.

"You see it's this way," she went on in a second. "Two people should never see too much of each other. So, I am going away to the mountains for the summer."

"But—" he began.

"You can have my house at Long Beach. It's quite comfortable." She looked at him shrewdly. "Eric, do you know what Long Beach stands for?"

"Not exactly!" he answered.

"I'll tell you," she said. "It's the *gayest* of New York's resorts and the *fastest*. Every well-known chorus girl in the country—"

Eric's bewilderment threatened to get the better of him.

Marguerita turned away and dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief.

"It's a sort of—of test," she brought out at last.

Then she looked up at him as he stood before her in his bronze strength and she could almost bring herself to be cheerful. She pictured him in a bathing suit, the cynosure of all Long Beach's languishing eyes. There would be parties, beach parties, dances, moonlight trysts; there would be women, dozens of them, to lure him to what Marguerita in her peversity now deemed his salvation. The idea exhilarated her. She would return in the autumn to find him lost to her. That is, for a little. The glory of winning him back, taking him from someone else, obsessed her and she thrilled to the adventure with a romantic zest.

"Yes, a sort of test," she repeated, and rising, went of her own accord and for the first time in a week to his arms.

Eric smiled his quizzical smile.

"All right, darling," he said. "You

are lovely, but your tactics are bewildering."

At which they both laughed merrily. The evening proved a jolly one.

Events after that until the parting were rather a lark. The day before Marguerita was to leave for the mountains, she drove Eric out to Long Beach in her motor. It was one of the first Sundays of the season and the beach was swarmed with its usual gay throng. Marguerita could see at once as they promenaded that Eric *was* a sensation, and a big one. They dined conspicuously. Another promenade later! The women stopped talking to look around. Once, Marguerita was certain Eric himself almost turned to follow the progress of a siren who had unquestionably flashed him a provocative smile from under her lavender parasol. Marguerita was ecstatic.

As they said good-bye late that afternoon, it seemed to Marguerita that the old thrill of their relation was back again. He kissed her once, twice, three times.

"Yonana," he murmured.

"Yes," she said.

"Till autumn?"

"Till autumn."

III

She had stipulated that he should not write.

"I will let you know when I return," she said.

The summer months passed, months exciting for Marguerita for the very uncertainty of events taking place on that warm stretch of sand that was ever in her thoughts. He *would* succumb—how could he help it? And she smiled knowingly to herself at the radiant prospect of their reunion.

She returned to town the first of October, having prolonged her mountain stay to make certainty the more certain, to key herself to a greater pitch. The house was ready for her, dainty and cool, her favourite flowers in their proper places. She wandered about and contemplated everything with a happy little smile on her lips. Then she had proceeded to shop. The gown this time must be of a more subtle delicacy than any she had yet achieved. The gown was found, of the colour of a fading gardenia. She dressed herself in it that night and stood before her mirror. The effect was everything she could have asked. She sighed deeply and sat down to write the note.

"I am back," she had written and congratulated herself on its cryptic suggestiveness.

She was ready the next morning betimes, but he did not arrive. That argued well. The next evening passed and the next. Then terror had come to Marguerita. Suppose—suppose— But just at the point where her suppositions were taking alarming proportions he arrived.

As he entered the room, stronger, browner than ever, Marguerita felt a little clutch at her heart. The deep light in his eyes was evidence—of what? She put out her hands to him, trembling, expectant. He stood a second, looking at her, with that quiet deep look of his. Then he had come forward and taken her in his arms.

"My darling!" he said, and his voice was firm and carried its conviction. "I have been true to you."

Marguerita gave a faint cry. He held her closer to him. The tears that slowly trickled from under her closed lids he gently kissed away. They seemed to constitute a great tribute to his triumph, for he read them as tears of pure happiness.

"Yonana!" he whispered softly in her ear. Or was it Yohana? But, after all, what did it matter now? A thing that is neither of the passions nor of the intellect! A glorious blend!

Marguerita smiled cynically through her tears. Yohana, or Yonana; all one, for it was, in the last analysis, but plain middle-age, and *she* was the chosen one.

"Yonana!" he murmured once more. She sighed wearily.

"Yes," she said at last, and then broke into an agony of sobs.

GENIUS

By F. Gregory Hartswick

THE Great Author and I were seated side by side on the couch at the club. He seemed in a communicative mood, and I was nerved to put the question which had trembled on my lips for days.

"Tell me," I begged, "how you have been able to write such real stories of death by violence. Your descriptions send folk shuddering to bed haunted by the gasping rattle in the throats of dying men. Surely you must have seen much of horrible death in your life to describe so convincingly the choking anguish that goes with the wrenching apart of the spirit and body!"

The Great Author smiled.

"I'll tell you, if you promise never to give me away," he confessed. "When I have a particularly frightful death to describe I fill the basin in my bathroom and pull out the plug."

SONG FOR A GUITAR

By Glenn Ward Dresbach

I GAVE you robes of rainbows
And my Dreams' silver shoon,
And sang to you of hill-roads
That go to meet the Moon.

And now you think the splendour
Is all your own. You live
Forgetful of the giving
That gave you things to give.

I have more robes of rainbows,
And shoon for roads apart—
But what if I had given
To you my heart?

FOR WHOM HE FOUGHT

By N. G. Caylor

I

BY mutual agreement they had decided to say good-bye on the street, choosing one where the midday traffic was heavy. Often since he had acquiesced in Rhoda's suggestion, Donald Elliot had doubted the deep significance she had meant to attach to such a parting. Just now it seemed that it typified only the restless attention, tinged with patronage, which she gave him.

The patronage—well, how could she help realizing how much her graciousness meant to him, and gaining in queenly condescension with each notch of realization, he thought. Women—they were like that, and it became them.

The waiting became long to Donald. That he was going abroad on a transport that night was somehow remote—immaterial. He was waiting for Rhoda.

Subconsciously, he was amused as he wondered whether he would enjoy the tribute of the people hurrying past. Perhaps friendship would well into their eyes in place of the strained disquietude. Maybe with war-time mawkish phrases, they would sling endearments toward him, telling him "God-speed" and "Come back safe." After all, it didn't matter. It was Rhoda's praise, her kindness, her graciousness, that he wanted.

So they hurried on—the others—and he saw them dispassionately and remotely.

Suddenly visible in a break in the crowd, she came toward him. Her eyes were bent on the sidewalk as if she were quietly choosing her way. Her little mouth was thoughtful; he noticed with a rush of glad pain that she was somewhat pale. Of course. They loved each other.

The welcoming pressure of her small hand, the intimacy of her glance—they were good. Her smile, always a little tardy, was the more a gift when it came. Unconscious reproach, which had filled him, faded. He drank in avidly every line of her, the full softness of her bobbed hair, which he could never resist touching, the white brow against the black velvet of her sloping small hat, her delicate eyebrows, soft grey eyes beneath widespread long lashes, the little downward motion of the upper lip when she was preoccupied, her little pointed chin—

"And so, Donny," she was saying, "I'm going to lose myself in work."

Her eyes gave him their slow smile.

"You may come back, boy, and find me famous—"

He felt a stir of resentment at her easy, delightful trivialities.

"I've listened to a lot of bugaboo about the stage, Donny. But now *you* are my world! *You* don't care, so let the others talk."

She caught the resentment in his eyes. With her soft voice bordering on the sincerity for which he hungered she spoke:

"Dear, if only I could have gone abroad with you. It wasn't right—I know—to urge you when I couldn't. But—training. Sweet, this will help me forget."

She had a way of putting things right.

Then he knew they were about to part.

"Don—only let's remember—the things we said—"

As he looked at her, time seemed to

stand still. He sensed the tramping of crowds about them, but there was no motion in this moment, as there was neither beginning nor end. It was a slow, sad life in itself, isolated amid eternity.

She flung back her head with a smile. He felt the pressure of her hand, the sudden release. She was gone. He saw her small figure disappearing down the street, everything about her characteristic, from the angle of her little velvet hat to the slender hang of serge about her limbs. It seemed that, departing, she was drawing his eyes, his thoughts, away with her. As if pulling realization back into himself, he came to in his own body.

She had been wonderful—her parting a symbol—electric with the delicate essence of her. God, how she could rise to moments!

But she had disappeared easily—just slipped back— The thought came like a sigh—how easily she plunged home into the streets. Already she was at home in their ready-made life. Perhaps she was looking into a shop-window with serious attention.

He set his teeth. Yes, that was it—a queen of the moment!

Somehow, he found his way back to his comrades. That night they boarded the ship. Excitement failed to quell a deep hurt within him. Low-barked commands, the busy, pregnant darkness, the thump of hurrying feet did not arouse him. The creak of boards was distantly sad, a whistle whined desolately, chains clanged. He threw his tired body into the bunk heavily, and slept . . .

II

In the weeks of training that followed in France, he took each day when it came with what it brought him, unquestioning. This was his stoicism in army life. His visioning, he confined to Rhoda. But she was very far. Her letters placed her even further. They were casual in their relation to him—a disheartening jumble of individualism. They might have been written to anyone. Donald, who had always pretended that he understood her, was forced to admit that without the inspiration of her presence, her balanced sentences were cosmic nothings; her flashy epigrams meaningless, her little ironies the frowsy dissatisfactions of an unpoised soul.

But he was young, and he loved her. An occasional "Don, dear," filled him with a glow. When she signed herself "ever yours" or "your own Rhoda" he felt again her nearness. Sailing his kite from the words, he was transported to the colourful heavens where every vapour was her rosy image.

Eagerly he sought points of departure from which to fly to exaltation.

There were few.

More usually he was forced to read, impatient, through arid wastes of bad description, unpleasantly revealing in its egotism. Often he descended to scathing criticism, trying, with a stylist's care, to find phrases to fit. Then he would give up. She was self-conscious, sex-conscious and type-conscious, he thought—a conscious Alice in a conscious Wonderland.

And the way that she was "trying to forget!" She had joined a "music show" as a chorus-girl. This fact was penetrating as the dust in a dune region. He set his teeth against it as if it were sand in his mouth.

"I have made a discovery," she wrote.

"One has got to begin humbly in the dramatic profession. Experience must include atmospheric sophistication. And coryphees, I know, revel in atmosphere, if very little else."

Her trite pleasantry made him exclaim in distaste.

Another time she wrote: "The only thing that hurts me is that I hate to be one of the thousands of stage-struck young women—I who so despise classified types. You know I have even objected to being called an anarchist because that is classification—and here I am."

Laboriously she made expositions on the chorus work, in what she meant to

be a seemingly unconscious contrast between herself and her surroundings. Her "unconsciousness" was pitifully flimsy.

"The idiotic thing repels me," she said in one letter. "The silly titles—back-waltz,. rag, double-eagle, ballet (the director pronounces it 'bally')—all these things mean something when shouted at you. And the 'chorus-ladies'—flat-souled creatures, loving their routine. I am convinced that if they slept in a row and someone shouted 'Off-to-Buffalo,' they would rise, mechanically click off eight steps to the left, kick, and click back right again—their arms swinging nonchalantly like lead pendulums. And they would look as intelligent as they do at rehearsals."

Often she assailed women with a dry, iconoclastic wit.

"You should see us in our 'Peacock' number," she wrote. "Each one of us, dressed in furs and feathers, represents the animal kingdom in herself—bird, beast and reptile."

He was baffled. This was a stranger writing. He found her letters as unanswerable as the fact of her joining the musical show. It was only by remembering her charm, her soft intimacy, the rareness of each moment of her companionship, that he could work himself into an emotional storm over what he called her "exploitation for the cheap enjoyment of thousands."

He could only remember her emotionally when he had not heard from her for some time, and had refrained from reading her last letters. The hard-minded arrogance in her point of view irritated him, and dispelled all memory of her completely.

Once he determined to reach her—the real Rodie—to attempt to pierce the shell of sophisticated iconoclasm and make the little girl in her respond.

He struggled with a sense of failure as he wrote to her. Wishing to speak of the spiritual degradation of her work, he wrote about its discomfort. He wrote that he thought her work "horrible," leaving the impression that it was materialistically so. In a sad terror lest she submerge herself—what he called "her real self"—in the sordid morass of cheap theatricalism he wrote her a letter full of pleadings and admonitions, wavering between fatherliness and hysterical schoolboy love; and in a raw, but desperately sincere, manner he begged her to accept what assets he had left in the United States—to take the money and attend a good dramatic school.

He wrote the letter feverishly, trusting that its sincerity would somehow touch her. She could not fail to understand—he was trying to keep her true to her ideal self, he thought. When he had finished he was hopeful.

"She will answer me—and we will understand each other again," he thought.

III

Meanwhile, in New York, Rhoda was living plainly from day to day, unconcerned with the psychic fluctuations of which introspection might have made her aware. She was a pretty girl, sympathetic when occasion demanded, clever when the situation made it necessary. Just now she was struggling with the engulfing vapours of boredom. Perpetual ennui seeped the joy from every minute; she was finding it hard to live up to the actions her intellect deemed proper for many occasions. Physically tired often, and spiritually dissatisfied, she was finding it hard to stage-manage herself at times. Often she was chagrined with a momentary sense of failure—when she could not rise to a gay mood, when querulousness spoiled the carefully planned vocal nuance she had attempted.

Among her companions was one Tom Middleton, an advertising manager, inclined to be heavy, and with intimate eyes that were bold at times despite his habit of narrowing them under stress of emotion. As she left him at the stage-door one night she realized in a flash that he might be interesting as a husband. . . .

Later, she faced him across a small table in a blur of swimming lights, a

little tired and a little intoxicated. She was very comfortable.

The sudden romance that followed was the kind that the newspapers describe cryptically in the breezy formula: "It took Cupid three days."

In reality, it was one of those common shams which plunge unanchored liars into marriage—a travesty of "love at first sight." . . .

With her marriage Rhoda assumed a sad air. It became her style, and had as its basis a sincere revulsion of feeling that once brought her as near fainting as she could come. Sadness became her. Shadows beneath her eyes gave her beauty a sweet evanescence. Besides, her mouth was childish in seriousness, but when she laughed her lips were knowing. Rhoda preferred the serious expression.

It wasn't long before she was enjoying life in a way for which she had had no leisure previously. She enjoyed her prettiness too much to be sincerely unhappy, and she enjoyed a veil of sadness because it enhanced her prettiness.

She began to use careful make-up. Her features, which would look at times finely chiselled, she learned to accentuate to achieve an effect of etching. Fine lines of carmine outlined her lips; her brows were touched; her lashes skillfully mascaro'd; a negligent yet precise wave in her hair added to the porcelain appearance of her head. But the permanency of the picture she made robbed her of her charm.

A long time had passed since she had received Donald's frantic signal for understanding. It was an obligation. She would answer—effectively. She sensed wistfully that it invested her with something she did not have. She was almost reverent before it. . . .

IV

It seemed as if a thick blackness descended on Donald when he read the letter, which began, without any salutation, "I am married now." He fought unreasoning against understanding. She was married. A giant cataclysm had wiped out the existing order of things. . . . The thing was beyond condemnation—almost beyond bitterness. One had to sense it first.

He put away the letter. Days passed before he could assemble his thoughts on the subject—days in which an aching numbness stiffened his fingers and tightened the muscles of his mouth. One day he picked up the letter and read it entirely.

"The economic struggle," "tired every night"—these phrases made a setting whose pathos, affecting her whom he loved, made him wince with its sharpness.

She was a tired butterfly—delicate, irresponsible. He felt that he understood. He should have been there to protect her. She loved him. "Dearest, the memory of your face is a living thing with me," she wrote. "I am always comparing every one I see with you—you were so dear to me."

And the money he had offered. "I couldn't take the last cent you had on earth—I thought about it and realized that anything was easier," she wrote.

It was the final stab of a petty soul. But he was young, and he loved her image—which nature had made to rhyme in poesy. He saw her again, always irreproachably attuned to his every mood, never assertive, a delicate flower whose every colour was made to delight.

He read avidly every line of her letter. The flattery of it seemed adoration, the easy solicitude was the tenderness of a vibrant soul, her cowardice was noble renunciation—and sacrifice.

Sacrifice? God, this world was hard. . . .

He felt that he would always worship women.

THE WOMAN OF 'FORTY-FIVE

By Mifflin Crane

I

SHE had been conventional long enough to do the conventional thing at her husband's funeral: she cried, she looked out of her black veil with tearful eyes, she regarded the condolences of the spectators with a melancholy countenance. Nor was she wholly insincere, for it is difficult to observe, unmoved, the complete severance from half a lifetime of trivial habits. She had done so many things for this man: cooked his food, put three lumps of sugar in his coffee every morning, taken tucks in the sleeves of every new shirt, quarrelled with him, listened to his uninteresting conversation each evening, made him listen to her own! She regretted his going; after all, the inconsequence of her acts with him had been the measure of her days.

Nevertheless, her fundamental emotion was one of relief, the sense of being liberated from an oppressive confinement, the sense also of an opened door, giving ingress to chambers of novelty and diversion. Her feeling was one of renewed youth, of revived hopes, of freshened possibilities. He was gone and with him went a thousand vaguely irritating duties that had been like chains during the years she spent with him.

In these moments her mind contained no definite want, no clearly seen prospect, but only the assurance that whatever might become of her, freedom was now hers for its gratification. She was tearful in the automobile that took her to the cemetery; she cried as they lowered his casket into the yellow rectangular hole, but as she cried she thought of certain changes she would make in her home. She was no longer limited by his prejudices, nor forced to the compromise of her own desires.

For several weeks she diverted herself by rearranging the familiar rooms of the house in which they had lived together. She was glad of the opportunity to give away many pieces of furniture that had long annoyed her; she enjoyed the business of buying new ones. It was pleasant to spend his money and know that there would be no accounting for the bills that came in. Occasionally, in disposing of something that was intimately associated with his habits, she experienced a moment of regret, a second of melancholy. But these dolorous instants never persisted; she was cheerful, she was content.

She knew that she was only marking time, resting before the initiation of certain activities that were shaping themselves in her mind. She had no especial interest in her home; she was tired of the routine of home-making. She had practically decided on selling the house, sooner or later, and securing a small, expensive apartment. She thought of the pleasure of a few pretty rooms, with a maid to take entire charge of them. Every night she went to bed with agreeable expectations; her mind was stimulated by new plans and new prospects.

One afternoon as she was walking out of a millinery shop she was surprised by the meeting with an old acquaintance, of whom she had had no word for nearly ten years. A woman

touched her arm, smiled at her, and spoke.

"Aren't you Lucy Cobbe?" she asked. "Don't you remember me?"

Lucy regarded her with a puzzled smile. There was a vague familiarity in the face of this woman, yet she could not definitely recall her.

"Oh! I'm disappointed," she exclaimed. "And I recognized you at once! Just look at me now!"

Then Lucy had her moment of recollection.

"Marie Jordan!" she said.

"Yes, of course! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Lucy? And you're my very oldest friend!"

They kissed each other affectionately and went out of the shop with their arms linked together.

It seemed an age since she had last seen Marie. She remembered her last as a comparatively young woman who had gone out to some western state shortly after her second marriage. As young girls they had been close companions; as married women, up until the time of their separation, they had seen each other frequently.

"Marie, don't accuse me of any neglect," she said. "If I didn't know you the first instant you spoke to me, you can certainly count it your own fault. You let me forget you. Why didn't you ever write to me? Just think: you didn't know whether I was alive or dead!"

Her companion laughed.

"Only the good die," she said. She gave Lucy's arm a conciliatory squeeze. "Forgive me, dear! I can't write letters. When I try to write a letter it seems to me my brains are all made of wood. Do you remember when I used to get you to write my letters to Walter?"

"Poor Walter!"

Her friend shrugged her shoulders.

"A person can forget anything," she said.

"Still, I was surprised when you married again. . . ."

"Why? I might marry a third time, for all that!"

Lucy turned her face in surprise.

"What do you mean, Marie?"

"I seem to be a very fatal person to men, dear. I've been a widow for nearly six months now."

"You too!"

She told Marie of the loss of her own husband. They stood out on the sidewalk, talking eagerly for some minutes until Lucy suggested that the other woman come home with her for dinner. Marie consented and they hailed a taxicab.

In the cab they had an opportunity to examine each other, and between their sentences they made their appraisals with critical eyes. In observing her companion's appearance, Lucy experienced an uncomfortable conviction of inferiority, a sense of jealousy. She was convinced that fundamentally she was the younger looking, but she had not availed herself of the means of youth that this other woman employed. Marie's clothes had more style to them, her corsetting was more thorough, her coiffure was immeasurably more skilful, the lines of her face were overlayed with a more sophisticated mask.

For an instant she sneered with an inward virtue at such an evident display of cosmetics, yet she secretly determined to experiment fully with a rouge stick, vanishing cream, and plenty of powder. Meanwhile, they smiled at each other sweetly, asked questions, and talked without interruption. Marie was congratulating herself on her own advantage; Lucy was confident of her surpassing possibilities.

"Poor thing!" thought Marie. "Twenty years of darning socks for a lump of a husband has done for her. She looks awfully like a frump!"

II

THE meeting with Marie opened for her a prospect vaguely enchanting. It made her more acutely aware of her freedom; the untrammelled air of her friend accentuated the knowledge of her own liberty. It revived the memo-

ries of her earlier years, the memories of romance and expectation, the glitter and the promise of old hopes. Occasionally, in seconds of depression, it occurred to her that she was old, that the years must have marked her spirit, must have stolen some incalculable power of response from her. These instants of weariness passed, and still without conceiving definite desires she responded to the thrill of desire.

When the two friends parted after this first reunion they promised each other to meet very soon again. A few days later Marie called on the telephone and asked Lucy to visit her the next evening at her hotel.

"There's somebody I want you to meet," she said.

She was very glad to go and she made an immediate determination to present herself in a new and more satisfactory appearance. She began her toilet early the next evening; she examined herself thoroughly in the glass, observing her face with an eye of critical optimism, and the countenance that returned her gaze seemed almost young. She carefully lined her eyes with a black pencil, and their transparent blue acquired a deeper shade, a more enticing depth, a suggestion, she believed, of mystery. She touched her lips with red, she rouged her cheeks, she covered them with powder, and scarcely any lines were visible.

She was delighted with the result; it seemed so simple to cheat the limning hands of the years! And now she congratulated herself that in the still plentiful strands of her light hair there were so few grey threads to conceal.

When she was ready she stood up in front of a full-length mirror and turned slowly around. If her aspect were not entirely that of a girl, nevertheless she felt assured of a certain suggestion of girlishness.

Marie occupied a suite of rooms in the hotel; as she went up in the elevator it occurred to her that she must very soon get into her own new quarters.

She walked through the corridor slowly, wondering what her friend would think of her, wondering whom she was to meet there.

She opened the door and entered into a little sitting-room; Marie was sitting across the room and a man was near her, talking.

As she came in they both stood up. Marie ran toward her, kissed her, gave her an effusive greeting.

"I want you to meet my friend, Mr. Wolcott," she said.

Lucy shook hands with the man; she saw that he was not young. This gave her a second of disappointment; her own sense of youth made her expectant of youthful companionship. As he held her hand during the interval of introduction he smiled at her in evident pleasure, and the agreeable assurance of his approbation washed her clean of her temporary depression. They all sat down, and as Marie resumed an animated discussion that had been in progress on Lucy's entrance, she had a few silent moments in which to appraise the man.

She felt that she liked him. His manner was sophisticated; his attitude as he sat in the chair, his crossed legs, his easy gestures, the little smile with which he listened, expressed assurance. She contrasted him with her husband, who had had none of this air. He was dressed well, he had an immaculateness and a finish.

She found his face interesting, full of reservations and suggestive possibilities. His countenance was not easy to read and so he stirred her curiosity. He wore a small dark moustache, only lightened by a trifling admixture of grey, that was trimmed close enough to reveal the lines of his lips, easy and flexible in the shaping of words. As he listened to Marie, he occasionally looked at her, and the conventionality of his smile, she felt convinced, assumed a subtle meaning, as if it were directly, covertly, intended for her, a silent confidence, an unseen agreement. The implication of this fragile comradery warmed her like the sip of an old liqueur.

The conversation became more general. Wolcott began to tell of some of the amusing aspects of a South American country, from which he had recently returned.

"These people are very different from us; we can't understand them easily," he said.

"The Spanish women know all about making love, don't they?" asked Marie, smiling suggestively.

"I've heard that," he replied, "but really, I've had no experience. I have only met the South American women under entirely conventional circumstances. There's no freedom of access to the women—you can't visit a woman there, go out with her alone, see her alone, as you can here. The only men who have a chance for *affaires* are the family doctor and the family confessor. But what surprises you in these people is their astonishing enthusiasms. For example, I found myself in the midst of a tremendous controversy on the theories of Darwin—something almost unbelievable, isn't it? There were hundreds of articles in the newspapers, several men got knifed in the course of arguments, a couple of private duels were fought; even the cart-drivers on the streets read the papers and took sides. Imagine all this happening half a century after everyone else had stopped talking about such a matter! The dispute was finally referred for settlement to the president of the republic. After an immense amount of deliberation, he decided that all men were closely related to monkeys. The question was settled, everyone was entirely satisfied, and the whole quarrel was forgotten with the suddenness with which it commenced!"

He laughed, and Lucy, unused to a man who could talk about such things, felt intensely stimulated. Already her life had a new colour, a new variety, a new sensation. Her interest was not entirely centred upon this man, however charming she found him, but upon the possibility of knowing many such people, upon the prospect of exchanging, like a new Cinderella, the drab garments of her former days for this raiment of alluring hours.

Already she was incredulous of the recent years, unbelieving that her spirit had endured them, unconvinced of their monotonous reality. She smiled with a deep pleasure; she deeply regretted the poverty of her own experience; she envied Marie the ease with which she talked of a sophisticated life. Yet her envy was not profound; she felt superior to Marie.

When it came time for her to go she was greatly surprised that Wolcott did not offer to go with her; she had been fully expectant of his suggestion to take her home. Smiling, she shook hands with Marie and with him, but there was a chill in her spirits. She wanted to ask him to call on her; her sensitiveness in that instant deterred her. She walked through the hotel corridor slowly, deeply depressed. It seemed impossible that a few minutes before she had experienced a complete content.

The night was cool, the air was inhospitable. All the people whom she passed, all those who passed her, seemed young, young men and young women. Their manifest youth was flaunted before her spirit; the slim, smiling women, leaning on the arms of their companions, were shameless in their slenderness, obscene and cruel in their vivacity. Her body was weary, not the weariness of a moment, of an hour, of a day, but the accumulated fatigue of years, the profound languishment of having lived too long. She walked very slowly, like one immeasurably tired.

Then she had the subconscious sensation of someone calling her name, yet her conscious mind was too depressed, too abstracted, to respond. A touch on her elbow surprised and startled her. She turned swiftly, her face alarmed. Wolcott was standing with his hat off, smiling at her.

"You can become lost in thought, can't you?" he exclaimed. "I tried to attract your attention by calling to you

from my car, but you wouldn't consent to hear me!"

She saw now that his car was drawn up close to the curb; he had jumped out to detain her. Her surprise kept her face immobile, she had nothing to say to him. He drew a little closer to her, speaking quickly, smiling with conciliation.

"Please don't be angry," he said. "I didn't want to see you go alone, but our friend expected me to stay. I hadn't quite made up my mind how to manage getting away with you, and in the second that you decided to go I was absolutely at a loss. You understand, don't you? I left her very abruptly and hurried as fast as I could; I've been lucky enough to find you. Won't you get in my car and let me take you home?"

Now she gave him her smile; all her melancholy was gone and her spirit was buoyant.

Unexpectedly, with a sense of acute delight, she found herself involved in an intrigue, with a rôle that flattered her intensely. It seemed impossible that she had been so obtuse, yet she had looked upon Marie and Wolcott as entirely casual acquaintances. She knew now that in some measure they must be more than that; that possibly Marie sought to make him love her.

With a thrilling unscrupulousness she found it delightful to oppose herself, like a sardonic fate, between the conception of this plan and its achievement. The allure of life returned to her with an augmented intensity; she got into the car and sat down beside him; the night air blew against her face like an exhilarating fluid.

There was an instant assumption of intimacy between these two. He commenced a confession.

"I met her out West," he said. "Was invited to her house there; knew her husband. We came across each other just by accident here. . . ."

"The same way, exactly, that she and I met again," interpolated Lucy.

"Yes. And I had just come back from the South and was glad to see someone I knew. Really, you know, the woman assumes too much! I don't suppose I've given her more than half a dozen kisses. I ought to be old enough to know better, but then, so ought she, don't you think? Must a woman always take a kiss seriously?"

The expression of his face was pathetically humorous; she laughed and his own laugh joined with hers. Careless kisses! His assumption that she understood them, that she had their acquaintance, delighted her. She had not been kissed by a man for twenty years! Her husband's kisses had long been formalities only, and nameless . . .

III

When they reached her home he helped her out of the car and stood on the pavement a few moments talking to her. She wanted to ask him in, she wanted to be alone with him and watch his face comfortably by a dim light and listen to whatever he had to say to her. The street was lonely, and the quietness of its desertion accentuated her agreeable sense of intimacy. But after a moment he turned back to his car, promising to telephone her the next day.

She went indoors with a certain return of her depression. He should have been more ardent, he should have been more eager. For a moment it occurred to her that his was a shortcoming fundamental and irreparable: the lack of youth. Then she remembered Marie and when she reached her room she was smiling. It was pleasant to intrigue against Marie. As she got into bed she experienced a sentimental instant. In a measure, to a degree, she was sorry for Marie. The unfortunate woman had lived too long; she looked very old.

He did as he had promised; she talked with him the next morning and agreed to see him in the afternoon. After lunch, as she was dressing, Marie called her and wanted her to go to a matinée. For a moment, under the necessity of a refusal, she had difficulty in thinking of an excuse. The woman was very insistent; she finally invented the

rather unsound expedient of a sick friend. Marie was a little piqued.

"I thought I'd call Wolcott, ask him to bring some other man, and then we could have had a little party. When am I going to see you, anyway?"

Lucy smiled into the receiver. Her pleasant anticipations were heightened. The situation was genuinely droll!

Wolcott arrived early. He was dressed in a light suit, wore a flower in his buttonhole and looked debonair. The ease of his manner, the reservations he suggested, gave a subtle charm to his personality. Standing in front of her and uttering the conventionalities of greeting, he appeared the actor from many absorbing rôles, the one who had lived a life of complexity and hazard, the life of her own unfulfilled wanting, and bringing to her now the completeness of his experience, and the maturity of his charm. She was glad then that he was not young; he had the flavour that youthfulness could never have, the bouquet of old wine. It flattered her immensely to see the pleasure in his face as he talked to her.

He asked her where she wanted to go.

"Did you come in your car?" she inquired.

"Yes; do you want me to drive you somewhere?"

"I'll tell you," said Lucy. "I thought we might drive out to some little roadhouse, some quiet place, have a little talk, and then come back here until you have to go. Do you want to do that?"

"That will be splendid," he said. "Nothing better!"

They went outdoors and got into the car. For a while they were somewhat silent. They did not know exactly what to say to each other. She was a trifle surprised at this; she had anticipated that conversation would be ready and eager. However, he began to talk to her presently about some of his friends, about certain of his business experiences, and she listened with an occasional comment.

His words disappointed her; she wanted something else, something more intimate, a confessional, a confiding.

They came out of the city and along the road passed a young girl and a boy walking close together. The pair did not seem to be talking at all. Lucy looked after them and an intangible regret entered her spirits like a perfume recalling memories melancholy in a passing that had no return. She wished suddenly that he would stop telling her these easy inanities; she desired that they could be silent with the meaning of the boy and the girl.

She was glad when, later on, they turned back to the city. So far the afternoon had lacked some anticipated flavour; she could not define its exact wanting. When they entered the streets of the city again, some of her expectancy revived. The sights of people hurrying through the streets, the sounds of a diverse and incalculable activity, the crowding of the traffic, returned to her her glimpse of mystery, gave her again the feeling of potentialities and alluring promise. She was smiling when they reached her home.

She took him into her little drawing-room and asked him to sit down beside her on the divan. She turned to him with a provocative smile.

"I suppose," she said, "you have been acquainted with so many women that you know the essential secrets of all of us! Tell me about some of the women you have made love to. Who was the first little girl you ever kissed?"

"I don't know," he said. "It's a terrible thing not to be able to remember the first girl, the first kiss, isn't it? Everyone should have this memory; that should be the most pleasant. However, do you know, the first one with me, whenever it was, hasn't left any distinct impression. Perhaps you have a first recollection of your own?"

She looked at him a moment, lowering her eyes a little, and in that instant she understood the poverty of her emotional life. She had no fervid memories; the experiences that would have given memories had been denied her. Instead there came to her recollection the ghosts of her hopes, the wraiths of

her unachieved fancies. And, under a curious impulse, she began to tell him about them, as if they had been real, as if she had known their substance and recalled their lingering sweetnesses in her words. She lied to him in a low voice, whilst he sat and listened to her silently.

"There were five different men that I loved best," she said, "and each one of them comes back to my mind . . . equally. The first was a boy who wrote verses about me. . . ."

Her inventions passed her lips with a melancholy ease. She related the situations that had never happened, she described the kisses that her lips had never known, she talked of separations whose regret came only from her imagination. She was convincing; she was fervent; he believed her.

As he listened to her, to the low-voiced utterance of her reminiscences, his mind responded to vague longings, to regrets, to the wish that he had known another life. This woman had lived, and all his own experiences seemed trivial in comparison with the poetry of her recollections, with the fervour of her memories. Why had he not known her before, why had the knowledge of such women been withheld from him?

The room was growing dusk, the afternoon twilight dimmed her face. He put out his hand and touched hers. She stopped speaking; his touch warmed her with a sudden thrill. She raised her head and met his eyes. She glowed with an expectancy of fulfilment; her dreams—like returning, lost birds—fluttered into her hands at last. He leaned toward her and kissed her.

For an instant the thrill of her expectancy persisted, and then it was replaced by a startling and malign surprise. His lips gave her no delight; she knew no response to their pressure. His closely trimmed moustache pricked her unpleasantly; the faint odour of old tobacco smoke that came to her nostrils revived a vague dissatisfaction, an old discontent, a well-remembered discomfort.

In another second she understood. This had been the flavour of her husband's kisses—the unpleasant moustache, the stale tobacco smoke! And she remembered, in a moment of time, all this man had said to her that afternoon and his words, she knew, were also well-remembered, were the words of the other man who was dead—the dull talk of dull people, of business, of inanities.

She shrugged herself from his embrace; she stood up quickly. Her hair was disarranged; she felt absurd and silly. She was acutely conscious of her age. She was forty-five years old and acting like a fool. She was deeply disgusted with herself, disgusted with her folly, with her absurdity. Her amourous sentimentalities seemed profoundly and essentially indecent. . . .

"You'd better go now," she said.

He stood for a moment irresolute and foolish, like a schoolboy after a reprimand. He tried to talk to her; she would not answer.

"When will I see you again?" he asked.

She did not reply. After another second he turned and left the room.

She remained standing a moment and then, sighing, sat down near the window. She looked out on the ugliness of a square of backyards. The sun reddened on the bleached board fences; it threw a gold glamour over the refuse of the houses, gilding ash-cans as if they were flowers. She stared without seeing, and tears came into her eyes.

They dropped down her cheeks, they fell upon her unheeding hands. She began to sob; she sobbed from the pain of her acute disappointment; she cried for the unattained visions of her lost romance; she wept from disillusion, from an indefinable sorrow, from an oppressing weariness. In the silent room her tears seemed to have a significance and an utterance; they were her ultimate comment upon life.

The room was dark when she stood up and dabbed a handkerchief to her eyes. With one hand she searched in her dress for a powder-puff.

CALPURNIA'S HUSBAND

By Helen Leeds

AS the door closed behind her handsome husband, a tear trickled down Patricia's cheek. For the third time this week he was going to his office after dinner. She knew what that meant. Many were the men who were compelled to start for work of an evening, but few, if any, ever reached their destination.

She wondered who the girl could be who had come between her and Jack. Dear old Jack, who had been such a tender and true husband all the eight years of their married life. It seemed incredible that now—and yet it seemed impossible to overlook the evidence—

Suddenly she was galvanized into action. She snatched up coat and hat and swiftly darted into the street. It was bitterly cold. A sob rose in Patricia's throat as the utter loneliness of the winter night came over her.

As she climbed the stairs of her husband's office building—for she did not want any elevator boy or watchman to have the opportunity to report to Jack the next day that she had come looking for him—her heart sank lower and lower. She knew he would not be here, and she wished—almost—that she had not come. Better to believe his time-worn stories than to *know* that he lied. But fate had led her this far; she would go on.

She swung back the heavy oak doors to his office.

Her husband was at his desk, working busily.

ENDING

By Maxwell Bodenheim

WITHIN your heart are untouched ruins:
Splintered palaces of regret.
Crumbled austerity silvers the crevices
Of timidly ardent doorways broken apart,
While here and there a slender pillar
Raises its frail blasphemy.
Over all, the dusty permanence of colours
Spreads like the discarded robe of some vanished song.

THE MAN HUNT*

A ONE-ACT FARCE

By Harlan Thompson

IT is fairly light in the room from the moonlight that streams in through the two windows at the back and the French doors between them. Outside the doors is a porch railing on the second floor, to judge from the tops of the trees beyond. It is a very pleasing bedroom, evidently in the home of some one with that rare combination, taste and money. The furnishings, light in tone, include a wicker table near the centre, a dressing table against the left wall, two or three wicker chairs, on one of which some indistinguishable garments are hanging, and a team of twin beds. The latter are in a tandem, one resting its head against the right wall, the other in a similar position to the left.

At the foot of the bed to the left is a chest covered with a Navajo blanket. There are doors in both right and left walls. It is well to make ample traffic provisions in bedroom farce.

A slight breeze stirs the curtains at the windows. A young man, handsome chap, is asleep in the bed to the right. After a bit something moves out on the balcony. As the curtains blow back for a moment a figure in white is seen making its way along the porch railing. It comes outside the French doors, another convenience of negligée drama, and takes hold of them. The doors, thus encouraged, swing inward. They are followed closely by the girl. Surely there is none who had any idea that the figure and its outer layer could be aught else than a girl and Georgette respectively.

She moves slowly, her hands ever searching in front of her, until she reaches the table. It can now be seen that her eyes are closed. A fit of shivering moves her shoulders and she starts in the direction of the occupied bed. She stops momentarily at the foot of it, then begins a circuit of the room that brings her to the other bed. Her hands explore it before she slips in between the covers. There is silence until a clock somewhere in the house strikes three. The original inhabitant stirs, but continues to sleep. So does the girl. The curtain is inconsiderate enough to descend.

* * * * *

The asterisks are not to be taken literally. There really is nothing else to use.

Besides, the curtain is rising again with a two-hour old sun, shining in the windows with the personal equation utterly undisturbed. The curtain could have remained down a while longer were it not for the young man, who turns over, flops back again, inhales deeply, exhales proportionately and blinks open his eyes. He stares before him a little

* Copyright, 1919, by Harlan Thompson.

while, then fishes his watch from under the pillow and looks at it lazily without raising his head. Rising on an elbow he yawns prodigiously as he glances about. The yawn crumples when his eyes fall on the other bed. He blinks them furiously and looks again with the same results. The girl is still there.

He turns away, then looks again very quickly. Suddenly he thrusts his little finger in his mouth and bites. He looks. Still there. He bites harder. Still there. He drops back on the pillow to think it over, but sits up again in a moment.

His movements have brought results from the other bed. After a few preliminary twitchings the covers fall back and there emerges a slender white hand and the startled face of the girl. One must be quick to reassure oneself that she is a pretty girl, for there comes a piercing little squeal and the face has disappeared again.

The young man has been watching in a state approaching catalepsis. He remains sitting upright, his fingers clutching his cheeks.

THE GIRL

(*Her voice lost in the covers.*) . . . (*A silence. She repeats whatever it is she is saying more loudly. The young man remains speechless. She lifts the covers enough to be understood.*) . . . Mr. Gregory, what is the meaning of this?

GREGORY

That's what I wish I knew.

THE GIRL

I am going to scream for help.

GREGORY

Scream for me, too, won't you? God knows I need it. . . . (*To himself.*) . . . Do you suppose I'm still asleep? . . . (*He bites his finger again to see.*)

THE GIRL

(*Still under the covers.*) I thought after what you said last night you were never going to trouble me any more. You said you didn't ever want to speak to me again and now you have forced your way into my room in a manner that proves you are not a gentleman, but a monster!

GREGORY

I? In *your* room?

THE GIRL

Oh, it is terrible. . . . What have you done with Lillian, you brute?

GREGORY

Lillian? . . . (*He looks about wildly.*) . . . Is there another one around?

THE GIRL

What have you done with my sister?

GREGORY

Lillian may be somewhere around—I'm not sure about anything right now—but you'll have to point her out if she is.

THE GIRL

(*Peeking out and pointing.*) She was right there in that bed when I went to sleep. . . . (GREGORY *looks under his covers.*) . . . What have you done with her?

GREGORY

In here? . . . In here, you say? . . . Where? . . . I think you're mistaken. I'm sure I would have noticed her if she had been, Bess.

BESS

(*Half hysterically.*) You're making fun of me now! I know something dreadful has happened to her. What have you done?

GREGORY

Listen here, Bess . . . if I'm not asleep . . . I want you to tell me whose room you think this is.

BESS

Whose room . . . (*Her head comes up.*) . . . Whose could it be but— . . .

(*She looks around in bewilderment and then lets out a piercing scream.*)

GREGORY

(*In agonized protest.*) S-sh-sh! Not so loud! . . . Not so loud, *please!*

BESS

(*Still loudly.*) Where am I? What has happened? . . . I know what you've done. . . . (*Pointing at him.*) . . . You've kidnapped me! . . . You said once you would be a cave man and now you are one! . . . (*She bursts into tears and dives back into the pillow.*)

(GREGORY *is left sitting up as before, not at all the cave-man in appearance or expression. He starts once or twice to say something, but turns back in dismay from her heaving shoulders. Suddenly she sits up and faces him defiantly.*)

BESS

No matter what place this is to which you have brought me—no matter what tortures you may subject me to—I will never be yours!

GREGORY

But, Bess, I'm not—

BESS

I told you last night when I broke off our engagement that my decision was final. You can't force me to change my mind. Out of my sight, you brute—go away!

GREGORY

(*Obeying her sweeping gesture by catapulting out of bed in his pyjamas and coming over toward her.*) Just let me tell you, Miss Ripley, that I haven't chloroformed you or carried you off anywhere. You are still—

[*He is interrupted by another scream from* BESS, *who has just noticed his attire.*]

BESS

O-o-o-h! . . . Put on more clothes!

[GREGORY *searches about nervously until he comes upon his evening clothes across one of the chairs. He flings on the coat, holding it together in front as he comes back to resume the discussion.*]

GREGORY

Now look here, as I just told you, you haven't been kidnapped or anything of the sort. You are still at Margaret Field's house party, though I haven't the slightest idea how you got in my room . . . like that. I want to say that I have no intention of trying to change your decision of last night.

BESS

No, I suppose you are glad of the chance to play around with Vivian Ray more openly. You know you are free now to make love to her all you please, or let her make love to you, which is the same thing. But if you thought you could do it and remain engaged to me, you have discovered your mistake.

GREGORY

I fail to see how any further discussion of Miss Ray will be of any benefit. That was all settled last night. The thing we are concerned with now is to get you back where you belong before anyone discovers you're not there. . . . Come on, you are going to start back down the hall right away.

BESS

But I can't go like this.

GREGORY

You came like that, didn't you? You must have. . . . (*He scurries around the room.*) . . . There's nothing else here of yours. . . . Wait! . . . (*He dives into the bathroom on the left and brings out his bathrobe.*) . . . Here, get into this.

BESS

But you must turn around and not look.

GREGORY

All right, but for goodness' sake, hurry.

[BESS *puts the bathrobe about her and gets out of bed, but halts in the centre of the room.*]

BESS

No, I can't do it. You will have to find some other way.

GREGORY

But you've *got* to do it.

BESS

Suppose I would meet somebody—a man—out in the hall.

GREGORY

Tell him you're taking a walk.

BESS

Any of the fellows would know this was your bathrobe.

GREGORY

Tell them I left it in your room.

BESS

(*Horrified.*) What? That would be worse than ever.

GREGORY

Well, tell them something else, but you've got to go just the same.

BESS

But suppose someone sees me?

GREGORY

We will have to run the risk. . . . Besides, that's *your* lookout. Come on, now, and I'll let you out. . . . (*They tiptoe toward the door to the right and* GREGORY *is about to grasp the knob, when there is a loud rapping. The two fall back and begin to search wildly for a hiding place.* GREGORY *opens the chest at the foot of her bed and motions for her to crawl in. She tries, but it is too small. At last he flings the blanket over the foot of her bed, forming above the chest a little tent into which he shoves her. That arranged, he vaults into the bed she has occupied just as there is a louder knock at the door. He utters a suppressed exclamation and with great disgust throws a hairpin out upon the floor.*)

GREGORY

(*With feigned sleepiness.*) Come in.

[*In hurries a callow chap in flannels. He is greatly excited.*]

GREGORY

(*Yawning laboriously.*) Hello, Simms.

SIMMS

Good-morning, Gregory. Listen, do you know, a dreadful thing has happened?

GREGORY

What?

SIMMS

Bess Ripley is lost.

GREGORY

No such luck. . . . (BESS *sticks out her tongue at the remark.*)

SIMMS

(*Going on.*) She has wandered away. . . . Can't be found anywhere.

GREGORY

Who wants to find her?

SIMMS

Why, everybody, of course, you silly. Don't you understand? When her sister, Lillian, woke up this morning Bess wasn't there. She had wandered away in the night—and in not very much else, from what her sister said. . . . (BESS *frowningly draws the blanket closer about her.*) . . . They say she often walked in her sleep when she was a child and the habit has come back.

GREGORY

Oh! Is that it?

SIMMS

Is it what?

GREGORY

Tell me the rest of it. Go on.

SIMMS

She is probably out in the woods somewhere now, lost or dead. We have organized a searching party and you

must get up right away and come along. I know it's going to be too thrilling for anything.

GREGORY

Yes, for Miss Ripley, at least.

SIMMS

Won't it be scandalous? You must hurry up or we will find her before you get there.

GREGORY

Not much danger of that. . . . (*He looks furtively to see if* BESS *is visible.*)

SIMMS

Why not?

GREGORY

Well, you see, I . . . a . . . I always have been lucky finding things. . . . It was that way with four-leafed clovers when I was a boy.

SIMMS

There's something wrong with you, Gregory. Tell me, who was it you were talking to in here just as I knocked.

GREGORY

How funny. . . . Was I talking to someone? . . . Who do you suppose it was?

SIMMS

How should I know?

GREGORY

Well, how do you expect me to know? I was—now I have it—I must have been talking in my sleep. Lots of times, would you believe it, I talk so loud I wake myself up. . . . (*He climbs out on the front side of the bed.*)

SIMMS

What in the devil are you doing with that thing on?

GREGORY

What thing?

SIMMS

That coat.

GREGORY

Oh, the coat? . . . Well, well, how absent-minded of me! Must have forgot to take it off last night.

SIMMS

How did you get the rest of your clothes off?

GREGORY

I think I can explain that. . . . (*He has come down in front of* BESS.) . . . You see it was this way—

[BESS *takes the most direct means of interrupting his blundering by pinching his toe.*]

GREGORY

Ouch!

SIMMS

What's the matter?

GREGORY

Stepped on a tack or something. . . . (*Kicking at* BESS *and hitting the chest with his toe.*) . . . OUCH. . . . There it is again.

SIMMS

(*Starting around the bed.*) Did you find it?

GREGORY

(*Hopping to meet him.*) . . . Never mind. It's all right. I'm going to get dressed and come with you.

SIMMS

Be sure you get on the right clothes . . . (*He goes out.* GREGORY *flops across the bed and peers around the corner of it to confront* BESS.)

GREGORY

Sleep walker!

BESS

Sleep talker!

GREGORY

If you can walk around so well when you're asleep, you ought to be able to do much better when you're not. . . . (*Reaching down and pulling her up.*) . . . You had better be getting started.

BESS

Do I really have to go out in the hall?

GREGORY

Out in the *hall?* You don't expect to get *back* to your room that way now?

BESS

Oh, I'm so glad of that.

GREGORY

The whole house knows about you. They think you have wandered out in the woods some place. The only thing to do is to get out in the woods and let them find you.

BESS

Go out in the woods?

GREGORY

Certainly. If you are lost out there, you can't be found anywhere around the house, can you? How would that look? Don't you see that you will have to get out there just as fast as you can and that I'll have to go, too?

BESS

What for?

GREGORY

Why, to search for you, of course. You're lost—you're missing. Hurry up and get started.

BESS

But what do I have to do?

GREGORY

It will be easy enough. Just take off the bathrobe, go out on the porch, climb over the railing, slide down one of the pillars, jump over the flower beds—and *run*. Keep going until you get out in the woods a few miles and then chase yourself around and around until we come and find you.

BESS

(*Almost in tears.*) I don't know how to chase myself. I never did it before.

GREGORY

That doesn't make any difference. You've got to learn. Look here. This is the way. . . . (*He gallops about the room.*) . . . See? That's all you have to do.

BESS

But I don't think I'd like to chase myself.

GREGORY

That doesn't make any difference. You've got to. It's better than being found here, isn't it?

BESS

What will I tell them when they find me?

GREGORY

Tell them anything. Tell them you're out practising "The Spring Song." Now go chase yourself. . . . (*She starts out.*) . . . Here, you can't take the bathrobe along.

BESS

Oh, I forgot . . . Mr. Gregory.

GREGORY

What is it?

BESS

Bring it along when you come out to find me, won't you, please? . . . You mustn't look.

[GREGORY *nods and she starts toward the porch. A knock comes at the door.* BESS *flies back to the bathrobe.*]

BESS

Who's . . . there?

GREGORY

S-sh-sh!

BESS

But I only said, "Who's there?"

GREGORY

(*More frantically.*) S-SH-SH! . . . (*He points to the bathroom. In a whisper.*) . . . In there. . . . (*He takes the blanket from the bed, wraps it carefully about him as a shirt, and goes to the door.*) . . . Oh, it's only you again. . . . (*He lets the blanket fall and starts to close the door, but* SIMMS *pushes in.*)

SIMMS

(*Looking about the room.*) Just came in to see if you were ready yet? Why, you haven't even started.

GREGORY

It won't take me a minute. . . . (*He starts to dress, but suddenly stops and looks toward the bathroom door.*)

SIMMS

By the way, I didn't know there was anyone else occupying this room with you.

GREGORY

What's that? . . . Why, there isn't anyone.

SIMMS

(*Pointing to the beds.*) Since when have you been twins.

GREGORY

It . . . it does look singular, but you don't understand about a little peculiarity of mine. You see . . . it's this way. Now, in the first place . . . I . . . but perhaps I had better begin at the beginning. You see, I have a little peculiarity . . .

SIMMS

Yes, you mentioned that before.

GREGORY

So I did. . . . Well, to begin . . . at the beginning. When I was at college there were so many of us fellows in my fraternity one year that there weren't enough beds to go round. . . . (*Forcing a laugh.*) . . . What do you think of that, Simms? . . . not enough beds to go round. . . . Well, you see, I was a freshman and so I was one of those that didn't have a regular bed. They were kind to us, though, the other fellows were. They let us sleep in their beds until they came in at night, but along about three or four o'clock, sometimes as early as 2.30, we'd have to get up and go sleep in the bathtub or some place like that. . . . Well, it grew to be such a habit with me that I got so I simply couldn't sleep in the same bed all night. I'm that way now, if I only have one bed in the room I have to get up and spend the rest of the night in a chair; but when I have two beds, like this—I get all caught up on sleep. Isn't that fine?

SIMMS

Very fine. A very fine story! I think I shall go before you begin explaining something else. . . . (*He goes, slamming the door.* GREGORY *strides across and opens the bathroom door. He looks in, then looks more closely to be sure of what he sees.*)

GREGORY

What on earth are you doing? This is no time to be fixing your hair. . . . (BESS *comes demurely out of the bathroom, tucking up a last strand or two and pausing to look in the mirror of the dressing table.*) . . . Don't you realize we're in for it now? That fool Simms suspects something is wrong and he won't quit until he finds out what it is. Well, what are you thinking about?

BESS

I was just thinking what an awful liar you are.

GREGORY

My conscience isn't bothering me—it's how in the world you are going to get out of here. . . . It's all your fault. . . . When you walk in your sleep why don't you look where you're going? What are you going to do? And what am I going to do?

BESS

I thought it all out—in there. I don't intend to go out in any woods and chase myself. The first thing for you to do is to get into some civilized clothes. Then you can go and get mine. . . . (GREGORY *picks up his clothes and makes for the bathroom.*) . . . Hurry up. . . . (*He goes in and closes the door.*)

[BESS *comes over and sits in the chair by the table, drawing her feet up and huddling into the bathrobe. There is a knock at the door. She glances up in alarm as it is opened and a servant enters, bearing a tray of breakfast things. He is just about to put it on the table, when he sees her. He gives an involuntary start, but recovers in time to save the breakfast.*]

JAMES

(*It might as well be* JAMES.) Anything else, miss?

BESS

(*Almost calmly.*) No, James. . . . (*He starts to go.*) . . . I suppose . . . I suppose you are rather surprised at seeing me here.

JAMES

Begging your pardon, miss, but since you ask, I must state that I am never surprised at things that happen at house-parties.

BESS

You are not surprised at seeing me here?

JAMES

No, miss.

BESS

Such occurrences are not unusual in Mr. Gregory's room, then?

JAMES

I couldn't say as to that, miss. This is the first time he has been a guest here. I was speaking of house-parties in general.

BESS

Then you think that I . . . that I—

JAMES

Begging your pardon, miss, but I have schooled myself never to think during house-parties. . . . (BESS *has picked up a piece of toast and is nibbling at it, to* JAMES'S *dismay.*) . . . Shall I get something more for Mr. Gregory?

BESS

Oh, no, that will be all right. He hasn't any appetite this morning. . . . (*He starts to go.*) . . . James, you won't mention anything about my being here?

JAMES

I never mention anything that goes on at house-parties.

BESS

Never?

JAMES

Never. Having eyes and ears is too expensive.

BESS

Expensive?

JAMES

Yes, miss. By not having any at the last house-party I was enabled to purchase a new motor. . . . (*He goes out.*)

GREGORY

(*Having come out of the bathroom in fairly presentable condition.*) More visitors, eh? It's becoming a procession.

BESS

James was a darling about it all, but he must have perfectly dreadful ideas about house-parties.

GREGORY

(*Noticing that she is eating.*) You can eat at a time like this?

BESS

Why not? I can't do anything else until you get me some clothes. Don't be so fussy. James can get you some more breakfast if you like.

GREGORY

But what are we going to do?

BESS

I'm going to stay right here. You are going out on the porch and across to my room. It's the first one on that side. . . . (*Motioning to the left.*) . . . You can slip in. There won't be anyone there now. Lillian is probably out helping them drag the lake for my body. . . . When you get inside, take whatever clothes you see and hurry back. . . . Go on now and be sure to get . . . well, be sure to get a variety.

GREGORY

But suppose they see me?

BESS

Keep down low and they can't see you from the lawn. Besides, that's *your* look-out.

GREGORY

Oh, it is.

[*He goes out, stoops down and makes off toward the left.* BESS *is helping herself to some more of the breakfast when a knock comes at the door. She glances up as it is repeated and very deliberately makes a face at the door. In a short time another girl appears on the balcony from the right, comes across and cautiously peers in.* BESS, *hidden by the back of the chair, hears a sound and peeks around to see what it is. When she recognizes the visitor she slides back into the chair and begins to eat again. The other girl ventures in and comes far enough forward to discover* BESS.]

BESS

(*Looking up.*) Hello, Vivian. Have some breakfast?

VIVIAN

No, thank you. What are you doing here?

BESS

(*Moving as if to go.*) If you are expecting to meet Mr. Gregory, I'll be going.

VIVIAN

Do you mean to suggest that I would meet Mr. Gregory here?

BESS

(*Sweetly.*) Well, I didn't know. By the way you walked in, I thought you must be familiar with the place.

VIVIAN

Are you trying to insult me? Don't you know that everyone has been searching for you since daylight?

BESS

Have they? How does it happen that you are not with them?

VIVIAN

I was out for a while, but as I came in just now I met Clarence Simms. From things he said I decided Bob must know more about the case than he pretended to. I came up to ask him about it.

BESS

It was awfully sweet of you to take such an interest. Too bad that Bob isn't here to thank you, too.

VIVIAN

Where is he?

BESS

Don't you know? I was beginning to think that you kept informed as to everyone's whereabouts.

VIVIAN

I seem to have had a better idea than the others as to where you might be found.

BESS

So you did, dear.

VIVIAN

It wasn't a particularly nice opinion to have about anyone, but after what Mr. Simms said—

[GREGORY *appears from the porch with an armful of feminine apparel. He starts into the room, but halts when he sees* VIVIAN.]

BESS

It must have grieved you to think such things. What was it Mr. Simms said?

VIVIAN

It wasn't so much what he said as the way he said it that aroused my suspicions.

BESS

(*Sitting up in her chair.*) So you have suspicions, then? . . . (*She catches sight of* GREGORY, *standing helplessly in the doorway, then turns back to* VIVIAN.) . . . Have you made a careful investigation? Have you determined, for example, whether the door there . . . (*Pointing*) . . . is locked? . . . (*As* VIVIAN *looks at the door* BESS *motions for* GREGORY *to slip into the bathroom. He sneaks across the room, keeping well down behind the furniture. In his course he drops one of the more intimate burdens and has to crawl back to retrieve it. Finally he gets inside without attracting* VIVIAN'S

attention. He leaves the door slightly ajar.)

VIVIAN

I don't see that the door has anything to do with it. The case seems plain enough. A girl disappears overnight, her sister tells a story that she has walked away in her sleep, she is found the next morning in a young man's room. It doesn't seem quite proper to me.

BESS

I fear your upbringing has been hopelessly old-fashioned, my dear.

VIVIAN

Old-fashioned! Then you . . . you don't attempt to deny anything? . . . This is dreadful. . . . You don't deny it, then?

BESS

I don't deny anything that has occurred.

VIVIAN

Because you *can't* deny it. What about your presence here?

BESS

What about *yours?*

VIVIAN

That is an entirely different matter. I came here, if you want to know the truth, to find you—and I did. I am willing to give you a chance to explain, if you can. If not, I consider it my duty to tell Mrs. Field all about it. She should know the sort of persons she has brought into her house as guests.

BESS

Meaning me. It must be hard, Vivian, to have a conscience like yours. I wonder it lets you sleep of nights.

VIVIAN

It doesn't let me sleep except in my own room.

BESS

That was very good. And what are you going to report as to Mr. Gregory's part in this dreadful affair?

VIVIAN

I shall have to talk with him first. It may be that he is not to blame. He seems to have left after your uninvited call.

BESS

Oh, I daresay I led him on.

VIVIAN

Your shamelessness is simply unspeakable. I have tried to be charitable with you, but you seem to have no conception of your position. You don't seem to realize that if I should call in the other guests you would be disgraced for life. We might as well be frank with each other.

BESS

I can't complain as to that, my dear. You have been as frank as anyone could desire.

VIVIAN

There isn't any use wasting words. You know and I know that both of us have been trying to land Bob Gregory for the last four months. . . . You almost had him once, but things are looking better for me now. You know what it will mean for you if I call in Mrs. Field and the rest. Don't you think it would be better to bid Mr. Gregory good-bye . . . permanently?

BESS

Do you intend that as a threat?

VIVIAN

You can take it as you choose. I do not mind being plain with you. I intend to marry Bob Gregory—and I intend to make use of any advantages that may come to me. . . . Now what is your answer?

BESS

I'm afraid I can't be blackmailed.

VIVIAN

You won't, then? You still think you can get Bob Gregory. I'll show you. . . . (*She goes back toward the porch.*) . . . Clarence! . . . Clarence, come here. . . . (SIMMS *appears from the porch.*) . . . Clarence, Miss Ripley and I have some things to talk over with Mrs. Field. Would you mind calling her?

SIMMS

Call her. Yes, I'll call her. . . . But wouldn't it be better to have James do it?

VIVIAN

Oh, very well. Ring for him. . . . (SIMMS *rings.*)

BESS

Oh, good-morning, Mr. Simms.

SIMMS

Good . . . morning.

BESS

Having lots of sport with your tale-bearing?

SIMMS

I beg your pardon.

BESS

I was just wondering whether our recent conversation had anything to do with your eagerness to run to Miss Ray with the scandal you had discovered.

SIMMS

To what do you refer?

BESS

I'm speaking about your proposal the other night at the dance. I was just wondering if there were any connection between my refusal of your heart and hand and your present interest in my affairs.

VIVIAN

Never mind her, Clarence. . . . (*There is a knock at the door.*) . . . Come in. . . . (JAMES *enters.*) . . . James, go and ask Mrs. Field to come here, please. Tell her that Miss Ripley has been found—in Mr. Gregory's room.

JAMES

Yes, miss.

BESS

James, you may take away these things. . . . And you might come back with Mrs. Field. Maybe you could get some new ideas about house-parties.

JAMES

If you don't mind, miss, I had rather not have any new ideas. The ones I have now are showing a very handsome profit. . . . (*He goes out. The silence rapidly grows painful.*)

BESS

Would you kindly open the services with a short prayer for my lost soul, Mr. Simms? . . . Well, then, while we are waiting for the jury to arrive, I would suggest that the prosecuting attorney . . . (*Indicating* VIVIAN) . . . make us a short speech. . . . Or perhaps you would like to have the accused say a few words in her own behalf. . . . Or would it be better to hear from the witness for the defence?

VIVIAN

Who is that?

BESS

Mr. Robert Gregory.

VIVIAN

Where is he?

GREGORY

(*Who has come out of the bathroom and stands by the door.*) I am here.

VIVIAN

You?

GREGORY

Yes.

VIVIAN

(*Anxiously.*) How long have you been here?

GREGORY

Some little time.

VIVIAN

(*Coming toward him.*) Oh, Bob, please help me straighten out this unfortunate affair.

GREGORY

Hardly unfortunate—for me. I am glad to know how to avoid capture.

VIVIAN

(*Changing to unconcealed anger.*) A very virtuous resolve, surely. I suppose you consider yourself entirely blameless.

GREGORY

I do.

VIVIAN

How can you explain Miss Ripley's presence here?

GREGORY

Suppose I told you that Miss Ripley was not in my room? . . . Suppose I told you that she was not Miss Ripley —but Mrs. Gregory?

VIVIAN AND SIMMS

Mrs. Gregory? . . . Married! . . .

SIMMS

When?

VIVIAN

Where?

GREGORY

Why, the other day at . . . a . . .

BESS

You forget, Bob, it was last night. I can't quite see that it is any affair of theirs, dear, but if they must know, I suppose we will have to tell them that we slipped away to . . . Georgeville— and that if it were not for certain uninvited guests we would now be spending a quiet and peaceful honeymoon.

VIVIAN

(*To* GREGORY.) Is what she says true?

GREGORY

As true as if I had said it myself. . . . (*To* BESS.) . . . Are you tired of sitting there, wife darling?

BESS

Yes, I am, Bob. . . (*To the others.*) . . . So sorry you must be going. Do come again, sometime, won't you?

[VIVIAN *stalks out, followed by* SIMMS, *who turns at the door.*]

SIMMS

Where was the place you said you were married?

GREGORY

Georgeville, Clarence. . . . Shall I write it down?

SIMMS

No, thank you. . . . (*He goes out.* BESS *and* GREGORY *look at each other.*)

GREGORY

(*Coming over to her.*) Forgive me, Bess, but it was the only way out that I could see.

BESS

Forgive you? I thought you lied beautifully.

GREGORY

It wouldn't have to be a lie, if you cared for me any more. We could go right over to Georgeville and give some preacher so much money he'd believe he really did marry us a day ahead of time. She caused the misunderstanding that killed your love.

BESS

You mean Vivian?

GREGORY

What a fool I was! I never heard of such a man-hunter. Oh, these women that plot to catch husbands. . . . Deliver me!

BESS

A girl gets pretty desperate when she feels she is losing the man she loves.

GREGORY

Don't try to excuse her, Bess.

BESS

I'm not—

GREGORY

Don't even talk about her. I'm too miserable at the thought that she is the reason for your not loving me any more.

BESS

(*Raising her head.*) Who said I didn't love you?

GREGORY

Your actions show that.

BESS

If I didn't love you, do you think I would have turned man-hunter, too, and pretended to walk in my sleep?

GREGORY

You didn't . . . Bess! . . . (*He rushes over and seizes her in his arms.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

A KISS FOR THE LOUT

By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

I

CARÈNE, the very young wife of Pompey Gilfoil, was yawning over the comedy of manners. Her yawn begged her husband not to remain for the inevitably tame finale of the play. Pompey's laugh, always good-humoured, conceded the tedium of the melliferous dialogue. They left the playhouse while the plot of the comedy was being brewed by tea-table repartee.

In the limousine, Carène looked through the glass at the weather. It was raining. Rivulets zigzagged down the bevelled surface of the windows. The rain fell with a force that obtruded bold, fresh whiffs into the car.

"*Il pleut à seaux!*" sighed Carène. "Some giant in the sky is weeping. The poor fellow is crying his eyes out."

She turned to her husband, showing him a raindrop on her white-gloved hand. "See, Pomp—one of his tears fell on my glove."

Pompey Gilfoil wiped off the drop of rain with his handkerchief.

"It has spotted your glove," he smiled.

She regarded the faint water-stain on the kid. Impulsively, she turned her hand palm upward, to count the tiny gold buttons running the length of her slim arm.

"Twenty of them!" she shrugged. "Unfasten them, Pomp." She gave him her gloved wrist.

Pompey removed his own gloves to comply. His well-groomed fingers worked steadily upward on her arm, and he puckered his face over the elusive buttons in a way that emphasized the rather ponderous contour of his features.

"This is no easy job," he said genially.

Carène studied the puckered, handsome face from under her eyelashes. How admirably compliant Pomp was; how impressive his kindly features and generous proportions! She bent her arm, to clasp his hand in the curve of her slight elbow.

"I have you fast," she said softly. "And, while I have you, I shall say something impolite, *cher ami*, must we stop on the way home at your sister's?—must we go to Isabel's reception to-night? I know you adore her. So do I, truly. But to-night, Pomp—in such pails of rain—! Let's not be punctilious!"

Her nostrils were widened by a whiff of the downpour that filtered into the glass-encased car. She turned to the water-dashed window with a gesture of youth.

"Ah, if we could find some adventure beautiful to-night!" she exclaimed. "Some wickedness fresh as the weather! Small wonder the sky weeps for us, who button our hands into gloves, and spend our nights play-going and chit-chatting, or stupidly sleeping, or—*ciel!*—stupidly sinning!" The motion of the car swayed her slender body forward and she buried her nostrils in a red rose of the flower-cup.

Somewhat ruefully, Pompey Gilfoil—banker and conservative—surveyed the sheened, girlish head bent to the flower.

"Isabel's parties aren't very hilarious," he admitted; "but I promised her we'd drop in a few minutes after

the play. We won't have to stay long, Carène."

A shade of meditation came into his rotund face.

"By crickets, you're right about the sameness of things!" he exclaimed. "It's the truth that nobody's able to find any new sensations. However, let's mind our manners; and be nice to Isabel." He smiled at his very young wife.

She pulled the rose to pieces, shredding the petals.

Pompey waited for her eyes to come to his, and, when they remained down, he spoke uncomfortably.

"Well, where do you wish to go this evening? Rake your mind for a beautiful adventure. I'm game, dear."

For a minute she was silent, making red pellets of the rose-leaves. Then she said, in her charming, restive voice:

"Many years ago, æons ago, Pomp, a great-great-aunt of mine—the little French *duchesse*, you know—grew so tired of Paris that she put her hand into the hand of a *marquis* and went off with him to Naples, where they forgot all about society and made believe they were a fisher lass and lout. They threw away their shoes and dressed very simply. On a quay of the Mediterranean, under the Neapolitan sky, they hauled their nets, and bore their shimmering, silver quarry along the finest promenades in Naples, not caring a jot that some of the fine people in the villas knew their story and their shame. *Hélas!* she was married and so was he, but neither was married to the other. It was their idea that they could find happiness hauling fish and singing Neapolitan love-songs together. If you were able, Pomp, to really give me adventure to-night, you'd carry me down to some water-edge and we'd frolic there, barefoot in the rain."

Her face sparkled. She might have been the indiscreet little *duchesse*, who, tiring of the conventions, had hauled fish with a festive and pleasure-tired *marquis*.

"My dear," said Pompey to his young French wife, "there are obstacles in the way of such adventuring; we are married to each other, and I am a bit stout to be a fisher-lout—a trifle oldish."

She was quick to touch his hand.

"*Vraiment*," she laughed. "I am weaving fantasies to-night. It is the storm. It seems to bring the spirit of *la petite tante* into my spirit. Sometimes," lightly, "I believe the dead live again in those who resemble them. It is agreeable to blame our *mécontentes* on those who, being long gone, cannot refute the charge!"

There was abstraction on her mobile features, an expression that quickly became a volatile frown.

Paulton, the chauffeur, swerved the limousine smoothly under the carriage-porch of Isabel Gilfoil McKim's house, where a strip of carpet and a footman denoted the reception in progress.

"I will not go to this tiresome party!" declared Carène, out of temper with the formalities of the evening. "Tell Isabel that I have a headache, Pomp—and give her my love." Carène pressed her ringed hand to her temple.

Pompey folded her gloves and laid them on her lap.

"So be it, my dear," he voiced pleasantly.

She turned a shoulder on him.

"I shall go home to sulk because your *embonpoint* prevents you from playing a lass-and-lout game with me!" she flung at him.

"Sorry; the years bring their burden," replied Pompey philosophically. "Run along home and sleep off the rainy humour, Carène." He stepped from the car. "I'll make it all right with Isabel. Good-night, my dear."

"*Au revoir, mon cher mari.* Home, Paulton," Carène yawned.

II

THROUGH puddles and over mirrored thoroughfares, the limousine began the long spin up Riverside Drive. Carène's thoughts outran the modified speed of the car and reached Pompey Gilfoil's elegant and decorous apartment: on arriving there Paulton would carefully remove his sausage-bulk from the seat

and open a large umbrella, to escort her up rain-swept steps; within, an elevator like an enlarged jewel-box would bear her to her floor; her ring would be answered by Stevens, the serving-man, who would voice a discreet comment on the weather; from the rear would come Witherspoon, her automatic, autocratic maid—she would be disrobed and a cup of bouillon would be served her, in a bed of down she would sleep away her rainy humour.

With downcast eyes, Carène listened to the beat of the rain against the car. She seemed to hear the lapping of the Mediterranean and the swishing of fishes' soft bodies as they were gathered up in nets, in fancy, she followed progress of an idyl in Naples, a love-prank long since fallen to nothingness!

"*Pauvre petite*," reflected Carène; "*il faut obéir à la loi!*"

She nestled in the cushions of the car. Her hands resembled dew-sprinkled lilies against her rich wrap and above an ermine collarette her face blossomed exquisite as anything ever fashioned by nature and enhanced by art. Her mouth was flecked with arrogance and dimpled by rebellion.

The skidding of the limousine to the home-curb made her lift her eyes.

She found herself looking at a face beyond the rain-dashed window—a lout-face, fresh as the weather!—she sensed a pair of eyes young as her own, a forehead-lock of wet, dark hair, water-roughened cheeks, and Herculean shoulders in oilskin—

Then Paulton was opening the car-door.

"I hope I did not stop at the curb too shortly, Mrs. Gilfoil," he apologized.

He hoisted the large umbrella.

"It is raining very hard, Mrs. Gilfoil."

Holding the canopy as if for a priestess, the chauffeur escorted her up rain-swept, marble steps.

She glanced over her shoulder. Discerning, through heavy lines of rain, a figure at the curb, she had a second, blurred sight of the young lout-face—then the figure crossed the Drive and vanished somewhere in the gusty spaces of the park.

"Shall I return to Mrs. McKim's for Mr. Gilfoil?" inquired the plump voice of Paulton.

"Yes," said Carène inattentively. Beyond the globular lights of the apartment-entrance, the town seemed deluged in the shimmering sweeps of rain. "You may give me the umbrella, Paulton."

Paulton demurred. "The umbrella is very wet, Mrs. Gilfoil."

"Yes," she said again, holding out her hand for the dripping *parapluie*.

Paulton released the umbrella in some reluctance. He touched his cap, and returned to the limousine. The car rolled away.

Drive and park were almost deserted in the flooding night. Carène stood at the entrance watching the storm. Through the vista of a murky archway loomed the wet cavern of the park. From the river below the parking came odours turbid and delirious. The torrents fell with an alluring sound on concrete stretches, gravel riding-path and foliage. Poised at the entrance, Carène thirsted for more than whiffs of the rain.

"*Moi, j'aime l'orage!*" she thought, capriciously. She opened the umbrella that Paulton had closed. It was at once a shelter and a shield. Her feet and ankles flashed down the rain-swept steps. She paused, drawing delicious breaths. Already water poured from the points of the umbrella and her suede shoes were wet.

On the far side of the slippery Drive the rain in the park was clamorous, there the foliage appeared luxuriantly sodden and the infrequent lamps seemed foggy beacons. The capricious spirit of rain-worship carried Carène over the Drive to the park, where the torrents were noisier! the bushes heavier! the lamps more eerie! Her shoes were sopped. Hidden by the umbrella, she was no more than a blur, an obscure little figure of the tempest! She ven-

tured to go on in the rain. She was deferring Stevens' weather-comment and Witherspoon's bouillon. *Eh bien!* she would not return to her apartment until she was drenched, she would fling a handful of raindrops in Stevens' face and throw her wrecked shoes at Witherspoon—and she would dream divinely in her bed of down!

Eh bien, yes! A wild rain—a simple rain. One might almost seem a young fisher-lass out in the storm, or a fabled water-nymph with misty kisses on her lips. Her tread was fleet, with no more substance than her thoughts. The path wound downward, toward the river.

A gleam of light on oilskin shoulders visualized a figure ahead of her on the river-path. She stopped.

"*Le voilà!*" she exclaimed, biting her lip. "*Il faut retourner!*"

He was swallowed by a black patch of the path. Then light gleamed again on his shoulders and on the heels of his shoes. Another patch of darkness engulfed him. She sighed, brimming with odd confusion. His was the figure that in momentarily blocking her limousine had flashed a young lout-face across her listless vision!

Her mind frothed with curiosity. Was he a fisherman, going down to the river to loose his boat and roister off in the storm? Was he the droll type that the festive *marquis* had once enacted in a love-comedy of no manners in Naples?

Full of inquisitive fancies, she moved on—breath abated when the light glistened on his oilskin shoulders, breathing more freely when the darkness hid him from her. On a path above the river she stood still, to see what he would do when he reached the sand-dunes by the water. The only illumination down on the stretches of sand was the green disk of a switch-tower flanking some train-rails between the river and the park. She watched him cross the rails and go along the slimed platform of the tower. The door of the tower opened, and an older figure in oilskin came out with a lantern and plodded off in the rain. The lout entered the switch-tower. A minute later the signal-light changed from green to red. A whistle sounded in the night, and a train went by.

"*Il est un signaliste!*" she exclaimed, laughing. "He is but a keeper of the lights!"

The door of the tower being open, she could see into the round room under the signal-loft. She saw the lout come down a ladder from the loft. He hung his oilskin coat on a peg. Taking a book from a shelf, he sat by a table and turned a lamp higher—kerosene light flared over a skiff set against the wall, a chest piled with fishing nets, iron heating-stove and rush-bottomed chairs. Though the lout opened his book he did not turn the leaves, but sat inert, as if staring at something that was not etched on the pages.

On the path above the switch-tower Carène was seized by a desire to go down to the water-edge and frolic there in the rain. She shrugged. *Hélas!* how could she go, in her dripping ermine and velvet? She leaned through the rain to look down at the river. She put her hand out, palm upward, and let the torrents beat upon it. With a sudden laugh, she propped the umbrella against a park-bench, and, crouching under it, achieved a *coup de théâtre* worthy of her little great-great-aunt: pulling the pins and filigree band from her hair, she twisted the finespun masses into ear-coils, *à la grisette*—removing her velvet wrap, she stripped her gown of adjustable peacock-trail and silver tunic, and stepped forth in short, ungarnished satin skirt and corsage with simple sleeves of silver net. Jewels and peacock-appendages in a velvet arm-bundle fashioned from her wrap, she closed Paulton's umbrella and laid it on the bench. The full force of the rain fell upon her. In a minute, she was half drowned. A struggling minnow. A little fish of the night.

She followed a path down to the sand-dunes.

The rain commingled the red signal-light of the tower and the lamplight coming from the door of the round

room where the lout was reading a book. Flat-bottomed boats anchored to oozing buoys were rocking in the fragrant storm. Below the tower-platform a crude wall of stones dammed a plashing river-pool. Noisy water-drops were pelting everywhere.

Carène, *la grisette*, reached the platform. She ran along it and dived in the fresh-water pool with a splash!

III

THE lout heard the splash and looked up from his book. He came running from the switch-tower with a gait that suggested alarm. He lost no time in jumping into the pool and fishing out a form slighter than a tangle of seaweed! Clambering to the platform, he carried her to the bright, round room of the tower and set her—dripping like a fish—on a chair.

"It's lucky I heard you!" cried the lout, aghast. "I've seen your kind before, these rough nights."

"B-r-r-r-rh!—have you?" laughed Carène, shaking the water from her fine, curling hair.

"You're a youngling to take the river-jump," said the lout.

Swinging the iron cap of his stove, he built a fire.

"What made you do it?"

"The rain," she answered, squeezing water from her tarnished silver sleeves and soppy garments.

He surveyed her from his lusty height. "I know," he nodded.

He pushed a tin coffee-pot to the front of the stove and went to the chest for bread and cheese.

"I'll fix you something to eat," he said. "Your kind are apt to be hungry."

"Are we?" said Carène gaily. She tilted her chair to the table, wet, and deliciously ill-mannered.

He poured a mug of coffee. Sweetening it from a brown paper bag, he brought it to her.

"This will hearten you up," he told her.

She burned her fingers on the mug.

"It is too hot to hold," she said.

Sitting at the table, the lout fed her coffee from a tin spoon.

Also, she munched bread and cheese with her teeth of polished pearl.

"Your food is good," she said.

He nodded again.

"Don't eat too fast," he warned. "Go slow, at first."

She decorated a crust of bread with a finger-fleck of cheese.

"Are you chiding me for my bad manners?" she asked merrily.

The question was lost on the lout. So he did not reply, but continued to stain her curving lips with dreggy coffee. The sound of the river and the rain filled his round room. The fire crackled in his iron stove.

He noticed the velvet bundle hanging limp on her arm.

"I guess you ran from something with all your ownings," he hazarded. He added, seriously: "No glass around you!"

Her teeth clicked slightly on the tin spoon. She said, under her breath, "*De quoi pense-t-il?*"

Aloud, she said boldly, making little fins of her hands and hunching her bedraggled, pretty shoulders, "That is true."

The lout gave her the last of the coffee. The mug being empty, he put it down. He pulled a chair to the opposite side of the stove and made himself a cheese sandwich. He took big bites of bread and cheese. His forehead-lock fell over his eyes, moisture hung on his young brows and ruddy cheeks, his damp shirt outlined his muscular shoulders and arms. He was all a lout should be, in a comedy of no manners!

Carène let her velvet bundle rest on the table. River and rain were boisterous beyond the open door. Gusts of water blew in, making the lamp flare. She looked at the things on the table, the tin spoon, the drinking-cup, the brown sugar-bag, and the book he had been reading. She saw that it was a French primer with which the lout had been improving his mind.

She seized the little book in surprise.

"Thou lovest France and her language?—*la langue française!*" she cried. Her face was bright. She said, impulsively, "*Ne parlons pas anglais!*"

Eating cheese, he stared at her. "I'm only in the second lesson," blankly.

She laughed—seeing by the primer that the lout had been conning such restricted conversation as "*les hommes sont mortels*," and "*le ciel est rouge les matins.*"

She sighed, half closing the book, and saying, "*Hélas!*"

"Are you a French girl?" asked the lout.

"But yes, *monsieur*," merry again.

He looked at her sleeves of silver net. "Do you dance for a living?"

She made a fish-basket of her velvet bundle. "One easily sees you are only in the first-reader that you do not know a little *poissonnière* when you meet one." She pushed the make-believe basket cross the table. "*Les poissons rouges*, to make your mouth water, *mon gourmand!*"

He burst out laughing. Shoving aside the velvet bundle, he leaned across the table to catch at her hand.

"Tell me your name!" he cried.

She used her hands to find his name on the flyleaf of the primer.

"Yours is Dory Jones," she said.

He pulled the primer from her, over the table.

"What's yours?" he asked.

Seeing a pencil-stub on the shelf near by, she jumped up, and wrote, "*Le Poisson Rouge*" on the wall above the fishing nets. She put the tip of the pencil to her lips.

"*C'est ça!*" she said. "When you study your French on rainy nights you may remember the little one you pulled from the river, eh?"

He came eagerly to decipher the name, but could not pronounce it.

"I'll call you plain *girl*," he laughed, leaning against the wall with folded arms.

She returned the pencil to the shelf. His bookshelf was simply a piece of driftwood swung by hemp cordage. She found a battered copy of Sir John Suckling's poems cheek to cheek with a thumbed booklet on marine animals.

"Does listening to the river make one thirst for knowledge, *monsieur l'étudiant?*" she said curiously. "Are you a *rêvasseur*—a dreamer, *mon camarade?*"

He was grateful that she did not laugh at his bookshelf.

"Maybe I am," he answered, shamefaced. "Don't you ever dream?"

She nodded. "*Mais oui*—yes." Her look drifted out to the rain.

Lounging against the wall, the lout's eyes were drawn to the lamp. His face was slowly submerged by a flare of dreamy blood. In his lazy attitude, shoulder against the wall, he said:

"To-night, I had a dream-notion. Up on the Drive I saw a woman in a glass car. She looked at me. I stood in the rain and watched her go up some marble steps. Near the top she turned and looked at me again." His voice drowned the sound of the river and the rain. "I brought her look down here with me! It was as if I brought *her!*" His reverie lent him a lawless beauty. "That was my dream."

Carène was no longer looking at the storm.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" she said. "An insolent dream!"

"Yes," said the lout. "Wasn't it?"

Somewhere out on the river a fog-whistle blew. The regular wash of the waves came and went in the silence of the round room.

Carène approached the table and put her arm through the sling of her velvet bundle. She said, with bravado, "*Hom!* A fine fellow, you, with your glass-lady! *Ferme ça!*" Her nostrils quivered like little gills. She touched her tarnished sleeves, laughing. "Your lady was dressed very differently from me, eh?"

"Yes," said the lout, still looking at the lamp.

She touched a blonde ear-coil.

"Her hair was in no way like mine, eh, *monsieur?* And her face—was it like mine, *monsieur le mal-apris?*"

The lout stretched his arms and shoulders. He looked at the little sea-

weed he had pulled from the river, at her tousled hair and white face, in which her eyes were oblongs of mica and her mouth was a splash of coral.

"No," he said. "The woman in the glass car was beautiful. And she wasn't your kind."

She lifted the tin drinking-cup from the table and made a mirror of it. "*Tiens! tiens!*" she reproved a glimpse of river-trickled features, "hast thou lost thy face?"

She set down the cup. She rubbed a pin-point of mud from her pretty chin.

"Great lady or gutter-princess, all we have is our beauty, *monsieur*," she said gaily. "Even the river is hungry for a tender crab!" She made pink claws of her fingers. "As for your *grande dame*, were the wave washed from her hair, the pearly powder beaten from her cheek and the daintiness blown from her mouth, she might be any *écrevisse* tossed up by the sea!"

She thrust out the tip of her tongue. "And this look that she gave you"—resting her velvet bundle on her hip—"what was it, that you brought it down here to be a living thing in your arms? Was it so bad that it tempted you? Or was it so pure that it pleased you? What was the look she gave you, *monsieur le lourdard?*"

Dory Jones, keeper of the signal-lights, dreamer, young lout, pondered her question. Colour flared high in his face again.

"It was the look of a costly woman," he said.

"Ah!" she cried, paling. "That was all you read in it?"

"It showed me what men up there on the Drive own," he went on, slowly. "It made me want to blubber."

"Because you were too poor to aspire to her kind?" coolly.

"Yes. And because it made me want to be her kind."

"Her kind are not so happy as you fancy, perhaps."

"I'd be happy, owning her."

"Why?"

"There was all a man wants in her eyes."

"You mean—? *Hélas!* you are only in the primer! You have yet to learn '*les femmes sont mortelles,*' and '*le ciel est noir les nuits.*'"

As he did not understand such advanced conversation, he said, stoutly:

"All I know is, I'd be a great man if she gave me that look twice!"

"So you think," she shrugged, retying the sling of her velvet bundle. "Ladies will look and louts will dream. *Moi*, I do not care. I am but a goldfish."

She slung her bundle up over her shoulder. "*Merci*, for so bravely rescuing me, *camarade*. Maybe some night you will not be quick enough, and then from the river you will hear me singing, if you listen."

She went toward the door and looked out. "See, the rain is nearly over. I must be off. *Bonne nuit, mon brave*. May another year find you up yonder where the glass-ladies dwell."

She was ready to leave.

"Hold on!" he said. "Have you anywhere to go? If you haven't, I can sleep in the signal-loft and you can take a chair here by the stove."

"That is good of you, but every rat has a hole," she replied.

She stepped to the threshold. A gust of rainy wind blew against her face.

"Anyway, take my weather-coat." He pulled his oilskin coat from the peg, and brought it to her.

She sniffed whiffs of tar and brine, of rain and oilskin.

"It is fishy!"

"So it is," he laughed, and threw the coat back to the peg. His hand swung toward her.

"Any night you're hungry, come down here and I'll give you something to eat," he told her.

Her face was thrown back to meet the gusts of river-wind.

"How high the water is!" she exclaimed. "It leaps to catch the little crab it lost. What a monster!"

The flat-bottomed boats were still rocking. And, below the tower-plat-

form, the river-pool overflowed the wall of stones.

In the uncertain, gusty light, the lout caught her silver sleeve.

"Kiss me good-bye, what's-your-name," he laughed.

Without ceremony, he jerked her up into his arms.

"*Tiens! tiens donc! et aïe donc!*" she scolded breathlessly. The wind was increasing and fresh gusts blew about them. "Put me down, thou!—and I will kiss thee," she wheedled. She touched his mouth with her fingers.

Dory Jones set her on her feet, laughing at her puny fury. The wind buffeted the forehead-lock of his dark hair. His face was full of laughter and young blood. His shoulders blocked the lamplight of the round room.

He stooped for the promised kiss.

Carène took his face between her hands and gave his forehead the sugared kiss of a perfumed soul—a caress no fish-girl could have given—a dream-kiss for him to hold until, having learned all the lessons in his primer, he might claim a lady for his own!

The lout was transfixed for the moment.

Closing the door on the simple, staring face, Carène fled from the switch-tower beside the running river. Her feet and ankles flashed in the dark.

She heard tapping wires summon him to the signal-loft.

On the path above the river, looking back, she saw the signal-light change from red to green. A whistle sounded in the night, and a train went by.

"*Mon Dieu!* the little train of cars saved me from my folly!" breathed Carène—in the sheltering vastness of the park.

IV

She found Paulton's umbrella where she had left it on a park-bench.

Hastily untying her velvet bundle and half hooking herself into peacock-trail and tunic, Carène enveloped her head in a scarf from the pocket of her wrap. She cloaked herself. Under the umbrella she traversed the windy park. She came out on the Drive with lengths of damp velvet whipping about her. With the river-wind behind her, she crossed a width of concrete and blew into her apartment-house.

A jewel-box elevator bore her to her floor.

Stevens answered her ring.

"It is a miserable night, Mrs. Gilfoil," he ventured to comment, as he relieved her of the umbrella.

"Is Mr. Gilfoil in yet?" she inquired, passing the drawing-room and going toward her own quarters.

"Not yet, Mrs. Gilfoil." Stevens gingerly brushed the umbrella.

Witherspoon came from the boudoir, with a wooden exclamation: "You may catch cold, Mrs. Gilfoil!"

A gesture of Carène's hand dismissed her maid. "Go to bed, Wither. I shall not need you."

In the sanctuary of her boudoir, Carène's agile fingers made a corner-heap of cloak, scarf, frock and shoes. She sat at her dressing-table, and made little white fins of her hands. "*Il était mal-avisé!*" she murmured, of the adventure, as she unscrewed the gold top of a lotion-jar. She erased the marks of the river and the rain. She brushed her hair until it shone like amber. After plunging her slight, white body into her bath, she went to her sleeping-room. It was an ultra-modern room, with height and breadth, flawless ventilation, archings and alcoves—yet the perfect details revealed by a night-taper tended to cloud Carène's humour.

When Pompey came home he looked in at her door. "Awake, dear?" he said.

"Yes," sighed Carène. A tear rolled down her cheek.

Pompey said, concernedly, "You're not crying, my dear?"

He came into the room with his somewhat weighty tread.

She was like a crumpled roseleaf.

"It has been such a rainy night," she sighed. "Did you enjoy Isabel's party?"

"No," confessed Pompey, puckering his face; "it was dull as dishwater."

With a little laugh, she clasped her hands behind her sheened head. "Shall we take a trip to Naples, *mon cher ami?*" softly impulsive. And, dejectedly, "*Ciel!* we'd only be fashionable people playing by the sea!"

Pompey Gilfoil slowly drew off his gloves.

"Funny; that fisher-lass-and-lout love hung in my mind all the evening," he said.

He laid his gloves one on the other.

"By crickets, let's go to Naples, Carène! Stout, or not stout, I'll kick off my shoes and play in the water with you!"

With his temperate, lovable laugh, he kissed his young wife. "Go to sleep and dream of the jaunt," he told her. "We'll have some happy times."

He whistled a Neapolitan love-song as he went to his quarters.

Carène nestled in her bed of down. She heard the river-gales against the windows of the costly room. The gales did not stir the silken hangings, though here and there on the polished surface of the glass the storm had left its tracery. She yawned behind the white lattice-work of her fingers.

Half wishing herself in a chair by an iron stove, she fell asleep.

THE INGRATE

By T. F. Mitchell

SHE selected the hat with great care, examining it from all angles and with numerous questions as to its durability. Her husband was with her during the scrutiny, and his face wore a growing look of disapproval. Although the headpiece was extremely modest in price, yet he could not look satisfied. The hat was for him.

A MAN should never blame the woman he loves for flirting with other men. She is merely trying to prove to her own satisfaction that she loves him best.

THE less one knows, the better one loves.

THE VISITOR

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

SHE looked into the glass, noticed that her lips seemed less crimson than usual and touched her hair swiftly with her fingers. Long, slender fingers they were, flexible and capable.

He would arrive in a few moments. She hummed a little tuneless song, picked up a book, dropped it, looked at herself in the mirror again. Her lips were now red enough. They pleased her by the contrast with her white skin.

She was waiting for his ring at the door. They would have tea as she had planned, and those sweet cakes he liked. What would he say? Would he notice what she wore? She liked her gown; the modiste, usually an idiot, had pleased her this time. She knew he would notice what she wore.

A long, cosy chat they would have and perhaps their acquaintance would make progress. This would be their first tête-à-tête, and she was conscious of a quickening of her heart-beat. A chat with a man alone always brought results. They were sure to be free from interruption.

The bell rang.

She gave a last touch to her hair and, then, slowly, carefully, looked at herself again. Yes, all was satisfactory. She would keep him waiting for a moment. The maid would not answer the door; she had been ordered not to.

Presently, she walked to the door, quickening her footsteps as she neared it.

"Hello! I—" she stopped.

"I have her, madame!" said a strange, dusty man. "A combination egg-beater, tea-strainer, axe and life-preserver that—"

He did not finish. The door had been closed for some time.

THE FOUNTAIN

By Oscar C. Williams

THE night has hung her curtains on the air
With trellises of frail and cloudy snow;
The moon is kind—a fountain here below
Is fondly fingering her silver hair.

The birds have folded in their warbling gold,
The flowers, the glowing beauty of their red;
One thing alone night tucked not into bed—
A fountain is a flower that will not fold!

DRESSES

By Rita Wellman

I

THEY lived in two rooms in a cheap hotel, and the sun never shone into their windows. They liked the electric light better, and on cold winter afternoons you could have found them in their negligées lying on their couches reading romantic novels, the room filled with light, steam heat, tobacco and perfume.

Their names were Elise and Jewel. Elise was the older, being twenty-seven. Jewel was only nineteen and promising to be very beautiful. Men came and went, but their fortunes remained the same. They were kind-hearted. They were amateurs . . .

When the rent for the small sitting-room and bedroom became overdue, Jewel was sent to interview the hotel manager, a kind, red-faced man who had invented a patent medicine guaranteed to cure anyone of anything. Jewel was always genuinely sympathetic, and listened patiently to the history of John's Wonderful Cure, and always came away with three bottles of the medicine—a present—and the assurance that the rent could wait.

Somehow they managed. If you should open the top of their heads under their careful hair and take a look inside in search of some solution to their actions, some main idea, you would know as much as you did before you attempted this difficult operation. There was no main idea. They lived vaguely, drifting with their emotions, seeking nothing definite, resisting only the difficult.

A small weekly sum came in to Elise from a mysterious source. Only Jewel knew of the wealthy man who misjudged Elise's character and thought it wise to "pay for her silence."

"As if Elise would ever harm anyone!" Jewel thought—and rightly.

But, owing to this man's cowardice, and lack of judgment, they at least had something definite in their lives, something as certain as debt and much more agreeable.

In the evening they held little parties. There were two actors who always came for dinner—as they needed it. Dinner was cooked on a small gas stove with one burner, and all of it came out of cans.

After dinner there was usually a game of poker. Jewel and Elise always lost—they didn't know why. The man who did never told. He was an ex-opera singer with soft, trustful brown eyes, who, since his voice had failed him, had done everything but earn an honest living. He had found their softest spot. He was going to put Elise and Jewel on the stage. "The Gay Girl," a great music-show production. Fortune and fame! Elise and Jewel could not sleep at nights thinking of this great project. After weeks of rehearsal and anticipation and loans—managed somehow—the ex-opera singer disappeared with his trustful eyes, their prospects of fame, and all their money. They never heard of him again.

One night one of the actors brought a celebrity with him, a "big figure" in the theatrical world. So he was introduced to Elise and Jewel, and they were greatly impressed, and felt ashamed of the disorderly appearance of the sitting-room, with beer bottles all about, and

newspapers, and a shirt, belonging to one of the actors, washed by Elise's kind hands and hung over a chair to dry. They became suddenly energetic and tried to smooth the surface of their surroundings by thrusting the bottles and newspapers and the shirt out of sight. They sent the actor out for food, and offered the "big man" the very best chair.

He accepted it with a grunt, and sat down, looking about with his suspicious, small, keen eyes, from which nothing ever escaped. A pickpocket could never have worse misfortune than to choose this man for a victim. He was a comfortably married man who only indulged in "parties" as he called them when he needed diversion, when things went wrong, when he was tired and dull. He distrusted all women, and divided them into three classes, beautiful, virtuous, and actresses.

He decided at once that he liked Jewel. Jewel respected his size and importance, and his clean, well-brushed clothes. He gave her a safe, comfortable feeling of solidity and well-being. After a time they disappeared for a quiet talk, quite naturally and simply, into the next room.

Jewel had the lavishness and graciousness of youth, and when she and the big man reappeared he looked quite silly and pleased and had hold of her hand.

Elise looked at them curiously and anxiously, and then, seeing Jewel so pleased, sent one of the actors out for more beer and became very friendly and sympathetic with the big man, and called him by his first name—Joe.

The big man called Jewel "little girl" and seemed to be growing very fond of her. Elise and Jewel became very happy and excited. Then Elise whispered in Jewel's ear:

"We need clothes."

Jewel frowned, then decided that it was no more than right—they *did* need clothes. So when the big man said, "Little girl—need anything? I'll buy you anything in the world," she answered: "I only need a dress. And Elise—she needs one, too."

The big man scowled, but suddenly came to a decision.

"Meet me to-morrow," he said, and told them where. "Twelve-thirty—*sharp*."

Everything was *sharp* with this man.

They helped him on with his overcoat, and their thin white little fingers liked the touch of its heaviness and softness and expensiveness, and they smiled at him, and patted the wrinkles out across his shoulders, and Jewel buttoned the coat with her lingering, soft hands.

"Twelve-thirty *sharp*," were his last words.

"Twelve-thirty sharp," they agreed, and patted and smiled him out.

When he was gone they embraced each other and cried out:

"New dresses!"

"Mine is going to be blue—silk."

"No, I want blue. I always wear blue."

"But blue looks best on me. You ought to have green—with your hair."

"I hate green, and, besides, who's he buying them for, you or me, I'd like to know?"

"You, of course. Oh, well, take blue if you're such a greedy little pig."

"Oh, I don't care. I'll take green, it doesn't make any difference."

"No, you take blue."

"Well, we both will. How'll that be?"

"Of course. We'll both have blue. You satin and I silk."

"But I want silk."

"Well, we can't dress like twins. I said silk first."

"I had my mind made up on silk from the beginning."

"So did I."

"Well, you get one, and I won't get any. I don't want any, anyway."

"Now, Elise, don't be sulky. I'll get satin then."

"No, you won't. We'll both get silk—blue silk."

"All right. We'll both get silk—blue silk."

II

After they had gone to bed, with their arms about each other, they talked for hours about the dresses—how they should be made, who should make them, where they should buy the material. And then they fell to making plans, where they would go in the dresses, what they would do, what their friends would say when they saw the new dresses.

Suddenly Elise said:

"And hats—we'll have to have hats."

"Oh, yes, of course. We can't wear our old hats with them."

"And shoes. We'll have to have new shoes."

"Oh, yes, we will. To match."

"Yes, of course. To match."

After Elise had fallen asleep, her body childishly curled, Jewel awoke her.

"How did you like him?"

"I thought he had a nice face."

"Yes, so did I."

"Rather fat."

"Yes, rather fat. But he has a nice face."

"Yes, he *has* a nice face."

III

In the morning they were up early, even before Valeska came to do up the rooms. Valeska was the chambermaid who, like nearly everyone else in the house, possessed a history—and little else. She was a Russian, the wife of a Russian violinist who had run away with another woman to America, where Valeska had followed him. A bitter, miserable woman who had nothing in the world but her hate and her love and a pair of antique silver earrings. She had great contempt for the two who had nothing and yet managed somehow, but she felt sorry for all women, because she considered them the victims of men and fate, and for this reason she was kind to them and lent them money which she made painfully enough, and even brought them real cream for their coffee.

They always told her everything.

"We're going to get new dresses."

"Indeed! You need them."

"To-day. We're going right out now."

Valeska went sourly about making the bed. She hated disorder and dirt and weakness and all of the things she had always known. She wanted straightforward, keen-bladed life, hard and clean as the ice that was never absent from her home in Russia. Somewhere in her soul there was a stern singing for duty and country and ideals, and here she was in this United States hunting for a worthless husband and making beds in a third-rate hotel.

She watched them, disdainfully, as they made their toilet.

This was the thing of all things which really gave them pleasure, and in this they were linked with their sisters down the ages to the time of Luxor.

The quiet, idle hours of self-importance, of massage and hair treatment, of manicure and beautifying. Spread out before them were their boxes and bottles and brushes, and, mirror in hand, they blended colour and applied it, and studied the effect, slowly, carefully attending to each feature until at last they were ready for the street, as artificial as Chinese dolls. When they had gone Valeska looked at her own haggard, tragic, burning face in the mirror and smiled—grimly.

They reached the place of appointment exactly on time—*sharp*. The big man was not there. Chattering together about the dresses they sat down to wait. Their envy of the well-dressed women who walked by them in parade was softened somewhat by the assurance that soon they, too, would be wearing the latest cut, and be able to look like everyone else.

The half hours went by. The hours went by. He had said *sharp*, but he did not come. They grew hungry. At last they looked at each other and exchanged a silent interrogation.

"We'll go," Elise said at last.

"Yes, we may as well go."

And they went out, their bodies swaggering proudly as if it didn't matter at all—for all their softness they had a certain bravery. But Jewel's eyes were gleaming slits, and her white throat quivered.

They were silent going home, holding their heads high, but once more in the hotel rooms they threw off their banners of defiance and cried like children.

Then Elise, being older, became "the bosom" and received Jewel's copious, wrathful tears.

"Our dresses;" she moaned.

"Yes, our beautiful dresses."

At last, calm and disillusioned, they faced each other over their cigarettes.

"I didn't like his face," Elise said.

"No. He had a bad face."

"He did. He had a *bad* face."

IV

In this country stories are supposed to have endings.

Americans, working always for results, demand them in everything.

Elise, being not so pretty, and with certain deplorable weaknesses, including one for gin, which increased as time went on, had a bad ending. I tell you this for the sake of truth, and not because I am a moralist.

Jewel, it seems, was destined for respectability. She married a few years later, a nice, serious young man who fell very earnestly in love with her. She lives in a suburb of New York, where she has numerous friends, a cook and two children.

The nice young man has grown duller and duller with contentment, as Jewel has never crossed him in anything. Their amusements are their back garden, their wedding anniversary dinners, and a weekly trip into New York when they take the children to visit the nice young man's parents.

I do not know what Jewel's inmost feelings are. But she is probably content. She has enough to eat and drink and a pretty little home that looks just like the pretty little homes all about her.

If you should ever meet her compliment her upon her dress. It will please her enormously, as she has always paid the highest price possible for her clothes.

BRAGGART

By John McClure

I HAVE had love and lost it, and am thus
Not overapt to treasure aught too well
Lest once again I lose all happiness
And feel the pangs of a departed hell.
I sleep no lighter for the love of you,
Not one whit lighter—sweat no bloody sweat.
Should you discard me for a love more new
I should not find it painful to forget.
I have forgot so much, my dear—so much
That you have heard no faintest whisper of—
That I might lose you from my thought and touch,
Yet rest unruffled by your lack of love:—
Faith, I would give my eyes, and halfpence too,
And half my song-books, if those words were true!

A MUSEUM-PIECE

By Leonora Speyer

SHE was exercising her Pekinese puppies in the Park when they met. They had met many times before —the leaping excitement of the two little dogs bore eloquent witness to that— but the colour came finely into his young face all the same and her older eyes, in which the fire of a girl still flamed blue, lit suddenly.

"You!" was all she said, and he laughed a little as he answered:

"Confess you're caught! This is 'vegetating quietly at Pretty Corner,' is it?"

She made a little sound—what shall I call it? Not a giggle, nowhere near a laugh, more like a sunshine bubble of escaping *joie-de-vivre*, and one felt that there were millions more of them effervescing somewhere behind the blue flames.

"Well, you know, Jack, I simply *had* to come up to see about my country-clothes. I can't trail about muddy roads in Lucile teagowns! And I wanted to pick out a piano for the cottage—just a teeny weeny seven-month-baby-grand to play with when it rains—and Chang had sneezing fits—Chang, sneeze for Jackums—and I brought him up to see the vet, and, of course, Wuh had to come, too, didn't you, Wuh?—and so, to make a long and tragic story as cheerful as I can"—again the bubble—"we're all at the Ritz for a few days! I was just going to write you about it."

"I see," he answered a little grimly and linked his arm through hers as they walked along. "That's a country hat, isn't it?" looking admiringly at the enormous, drooping velvet mushroom leaning over the full, brown waves of hair.

"Do you like it?" she asked anxiously. "It's brand-new! Bendel's, of course, and oh, the prices this year! It seems positively wicked—but what can you do about it? I—I only got three," she bubbled happily. "Now don't say the blue feathers exactly match my eyes! I know they do and they're intended to, and I've been told so four times this morning!"

"I won't then," he answered. "I'll say I think it's much too—too old for you! It makes you look at least twenty-eight."

She leaned a little closer to him.

"Oh, Jack, I'm so glad to see you! I've been thinking about you—worrying about you! That's the real reason that brought me to town! And then —we stumble upon each other the very day I arrive, in this dear, romantic way!" she bubbled. "And now I want to hear all about Evelyn. . . . Let's find a nice, quiet bench near the Museum—there's never anybody near the Museum, I've noticed. I believe people are a little afraid of it—oh, Jack! There's a policeman!—Chang! Wuh! Come here, you horrible little things, do you want to get me arrested?"

She smiled brilliantly at the tall young Irishman as the dogs were led decorously past the stern arm of the law, in little leather leashes.

"No, no, let me take them—a great, grown-up man being drawn by two Pekinese pups, Jack!" She looked at him with a quiet pride. "I thought you were in Boston," she said.

"So I was—but I got over it," he answered. "I've just telegraphed you about coming down to-night."

She gave a little cry.

"Oh, dear! And I'm not there! And Bob taking me to the theatre! Shall I put him off? Do you think he could stand being put off, Jack?" she bubbled again. "You know he went to school with your Uncle William. Ought I to put him off, do you think?—Chang! Come here!"

"Oh, don't throw old Bob over—though I haven't forgiven him yet, Katherine, and don't mean to, Uncle William or no Uncle William!"

She beamed. "Oh, yes, you have! Tell me, how's dear Evelyn?"

"Evelyn's all right," he answered a little restlessly. "She's sweet! She cried when I came down to Pretty Corner last week, Katherine! I felt—a criminal—and it's all so absurd, really!"

The other's face was very calm.

"What had she got to cry about, I'd like to know? I hadn't seen you for a month!"

"Whose fault was that?" he asked quietly.

"Here I am—wiped out," continued Katherine. "At Pretty Corner all winter—"

"It's the fifteenth of October," he interrupted.

"*All winter*," she went on. "Don't interrupt, please, you know I'm going to veg—stop there all winter. And you're *hers*, your big emerald that *I* helped choose—oh, Jack, I adored choosing it!—safe on her finger! What has she got to cry about, kindly tell your oldest friend!"

He looked at her and smiled a little.

"*You* wiped out! That's funny. I believe you'd like to be—for a little while—just for the novelty of it. Well, you're not, and you never will be—can't be! And you know it! No one can take your place, eliminate you—and no one, not even my little Evelyn, can make me less yours, Katherine!"

Blue flames dancing—"Dear Jack"—the tenderness of it—"Let's sit here!" She looked about warily. "I think we might let the dogs loose—oh, Jack, she'll cover you with mud! Your nice, clean coat!"

The little dog had leapt on to his knees—they were evidently old friends—and was climbing up, biting his buttons joyously on the way.

"Good doggy!" he answered, dodging Wuh's frantic kisses. "You understand, don't you, old girl? *You* don't drop old friends overnight, do you?"

And he threw a pebble along the path, which sent the faithful Wuh hotly scampering in pursuit.

"She's as playful as a kitten, isn't she?" remarked Katherine tactfully, and slipped her hand into his.

They sat silent for a few minutes.

He spoke first. "Well, I hope you're satisfied, my dear! I'm engaged to Evelyn, you're dashing about with Bob—in blue feathers—"

"Jack, be fair. I'm—*wiped out*—at Pretty Corner—and Bob never wore blue feathers in his life!"

She bubbled ever so little, but held his hand very tight.

"We're sufficiently independent of each other, I hope! *You* didn't know I was back in town, *I* didn't know you were at the Ritz—"

"I'm not, dear. I'm with you in the Park, we're having a perfect little tête-à-tête, holding each other's hands and—"

"It's my turn to say don't interrupt, please; I want to talk to you seriously."

"Please don't, Jack, it's bad for my complexion. Tell me instead that you are happy with Evelyn, that I have arranged things beautifully, and that you're very, very grateful to me!"

He looked stolidly in front of him. "It's always a mistake to arrange, anyway, I believe."

"How *can* you say that!" (Indignantly.) "Why, I *always* arrange, Jack, you know I do—and always beautifully! You love Evelyn, she adores you—and I was—in the way, dear boy! Oh, why, why won't you enjoy it all, the way I planned you to?"

"And it's a mistake to plan," he went on. "What do you call beautifully arranged? I was beautifully satisfied with things as they were! I was perfectly happy! Then you discovered

that Evelyn was fond of me! Was she, I wonder—or did you deliberately make her fond of me, 'put the thought on her,' as the Christian-Scientists call it? And what did you do it for? Were you tired of me, Katherine?"

She made a little movement towards him that was entirely loving.

"Well, you 'put the thought' on me, at any rate—what a cad I feel!—you discovered—or I discovered—it doesn't really matter who discovered, does it, as long as it was discovered?—that I loved Evelyn! But I never dreamed of giving you up, Katherine! I thought we were all going to be so happy together."

"Dear Jack," said Katherine, "go on."

"Well, I asked her to marry me, and her first words were—'what will *she* say?' And the look in her eyes! Her dear eyes! They were simply shouting, 'You've chosen me, you're mine, you're mine!' And suddenly I realized that she was—jealous of you, madly jealous—and I had never suspected it! And I felt somehow that I'd lost you, given you up—and I knew I couldn't!"

"Dear Jack," said Katherine.

"Oh, and she thinks it's 'funny' I call you Katherine! I told her everybody did, and that I always had—and she said, 'I shan't, Jack!' I almost told her I wouldn't let her! Instead of that—I kissed her!"

"Good boy," said Katherine.

"I love Evelyn. I love her! But she can't understand—and she won't! We talk so much about you and everything we say seems to make it worse. And back of it all is the miserable, hurt longing for you, the fear of losing you! I swear I'll never give you up—no woman on earth, nor Evelyn herself, can make me do that!"

"Of course not," said Katherine mistily.

"And that's all," said Jack—and he lit a cigarette.

She watched him blow three fretful little puffs of smoke into the sunshine and then she spoke.

"Evelyn's nerves are on edge," she meditated. "It's very upsetting, being proposed to, Jack. No man can quite understand that. I'm jumpy for days afterwards, each time. And poor little Evelyn is so young—though I'm sure you did it awfully well," she added kindly. "After you're both beautifully and becomingly married in broadcloth and white satin and rice, and all your useful wedding-presents changed for something pretty, she'll feel quite differently about me, you'll see," she bubbled. "Oh, Jack, she'll probably discover me! And tell you all about me! What a helpmate Evelyn is going to be! Don't ever, ever forget that I found her, ungrateful Jack."

She gave his hand a gentle little squeeze.

"In the meantime, you must let me go on eliminating myself. I simply won't come between you two young things! Chang! Do go and take him away from those children, Jack. They're feeding him—and he's under a strict régime! Heaven knows what they're giving him!"

She watched him as he rescued Chang from the too-friendly overtures of the little group, making him beg first, bark his thanks and give his paw all round, to the intense delight of children and nurses. How well he carried himself, how tall he was—how she loved him!

"What a father you'll make!" she said as he came back to her. "How dear you are with children! Do you know, I actually believe you've changed—I very nearly said grown—the last six weeks! You look gloriously engaged, Jack! I hope the nurses over there think it's to me!"

"I look too old for you, my dear. They probably think I'm Uncle William! You eighth wonder! I wish you could have seen yourself smiling at that policeman!"

She chuckled. "Don't be a goose! You *know* I'm old enough to be your mother! I can't help it if I don't feel old, can I? And I don't mean to try and help it, what's more! Let old Anno Domini shift for himself, there's much too much talk about him anyway.

He's a bore! Lie down, Wuh! You muddy little thing—*good girl!*"

She looked at him, a little remorsefully. "Tell me, are you still angry with me? About my—rest-cure, I mean?"

He thought a little.

"I was angry, Katherine, furious, and utterly miserable. I still can't bear to think about it! You were downright cruel—and I don't think even now you realize it in the least. You go on pushing me away, you seem to want me to neglect you, forget you, be gloriously, selfishly happy with Evelyn! *Why?* Surely ours is the most beautiful relationship that ever existed between man and woman, you know that, dear, you taught me that! And then, just at the time I needed you the most, you disappeared! Vanished! And called it a rest-cure! As if you needed a rest-cure!"

"I didn't, Jack," she bubbled, "that wasn't the idea at all! *You* needed it, you—and Evelyn.

"For a month you were gone out of my life," he went on. "For a whole month! You might have been dying, dead—in heaven knows what mischief—for all I knew of it!"

"Oh, no," she corrected. "You had a little note from me every day, you knew that I was all right, didn't you? And you had Evelyn."

He laughed aloud. "Knew that you were all right! Oh, did I? What do you call all right, may I ask, without being rudely personal? Where were you? *I* didn't know! And Evelyn kept asking about you—and I thought I'd go mad inventing things to tell her! I was determined she shouldn't know—what would she have thought? Do you think Evelyn would believe that you needed a rest-cure? She's no fool, bless her! Obviously she thought that something was wrong. Finally she grew tactful and we never spoke about you. That left a nice hole in the conversation—and we edged around it, pretending it wasn't there! And your little notes! A fat lot of good *they* did! 'Be happy, Jack, get to know that sweet girl, spend every hour you can with her, give her my love, don't forget your K.' *My K.!* I could have—slapped my K.!"

He caught her hand, then dropped it coldly. "And then you calmly return! Ring me up from the Ritz, inform me the house is let for the winter and that you are going to Pretty Corner for six months! And could Evelyn 'spare me' some Sunday. Of course I was 'angry,' of course I said I wouldn't come to Pretty Corner—and of course I came! And Evelyn suggested coming, too—and I had to say I wanted to see you alone this time. That helped to make things better all round, didn't it? Oh, my God!"

"*Dear* Jack," said Katherine.

"Dear *hell!* And it leaks out that Bob, old Bob, my oldest friend Bob, had seen you every day, and that you were only at the Brevoort all the time!"

"Jack, you've really no idea how perfectly delightful old New York is. I never—"

"And he had lunched with me regularly and witnessed my ravings, seen your notes, helped pump the old fool that brought them! Even for you, it was 'going some,' my dear! And then you ask me if I'm still angry! Besides, who's ever angry with you?"

"But the reason," she cried, "tiresome boy, you *will* keep ignoring the reason! I had monopolized you long enough, I was standing in your way, you were—too fond of me, dear! I was too old for you—how I hate saying that!—and you and Evelyn looked such sweets together!"

"Sweets!" he sneered. "Bob isn't too young, is he? Why don't you marry him off? He'd look sweet with some dear old lady, I'll bet!" he stormed.

Katherine smiled. "I'm thinking strongly of it! I even believe I've found the dear old lady! But don't tell him, he mustn't know yet."

"*Tell* him?" replied Jack. "Tell *him?* I never do anything but curse him when we meet—and then he begins to snicker and I'm so afraid I'll—kill him that I have to clear out! He's not worth risking the electric chair for!"

Suddenly they both laughed. They looked at each other tenderly.

"Jack," she said, "I'm glad it's Evelyn! I tell you frankly I couldn't have borne its being anyone else!"

"It couldn't be anyone else," he answered.

"I know it," she smiled, "she's the only girl—and you're the only Jack—and neither of you are very grateful to me, are you?"

"The only girl, the only girl," he grumbled. "What's that got to do with it anyhow? You're the only girl, too—and you're trying to chuck me, you know you are! Well, you won't succeed, that's all."

"Oh, how unjust!" She spoke these words so gently, so blissfully. "Just because I refuse to be a millstone round your dear neck! Say you're sorry, Jack! Or I shall have to kiss you before all those sweet, innocent little children, and poor, tired nurses!"

"If you do, I'll go and tell them—what we are to each other! Ah, you pale at the thought, don't you, shameless one! Katherine, Katherine, I believe you're going to marry Bob yourself, just as soon as I'm safely disposed of! That damned, damned Bob! And God help you both when I find out!"

"Jack," she said, "you're a fool and I simply adore you!"

She got up.

"I've got to go and try on those disgusting tweeds; and walking-boots! I wonder if any man realizes what a tragic thing it is to be a woman?"

"Some men realize what an extravagant thing it is, Katherine. You'll never wear the tweeds, you'll never walk a step in the boots."

"Never wear them? Never walk at Pretty Corner? Why, how can you say that, you, who have seen me there so many times!"

"Exactly," he answered.

She gathered up the dogs with a little shake of the two leashes. "He doesn't understand little muzzy, does he? Muzzy duzzy, muzzy duzzy! Oh, you lambs of Pekes! Jack, did you ever see such a sublime ménage? Everybody stops me in the street to talk about them."

"I dare say," said Jack, looking at her hat, her eyes. "The blue feathers do match, Katherine. Did you leave an eye for a pattern?"

They passed the Museum and Katherine gazed intellectually at its stern walls.

"I always mean to go there some nice, rainy day, quite by myself, and spend a wonderful morning with great and beautiful things. Oh, how much good it is going to do me, Jack, and how I long for it!"

"You'd better take Bob with you. If he's old enough, that is," he jeered.

"I said quite by myself," she answered chastely, "that's the whole point. That's the splendid, mysterious way it's going to help me."

"I see," said Jack. They walked on in silence.

"When are you going to get married?" she asked suddenly.

"Ask Evelyn, my dear. Are you coming to the wedding, Katherine?"

She gave him a swift glance. At that moment their eyes were curiously alike.

"If I'm invited," she said lightly. "You old darling! Perhaps when I'm a—grandmother Evelyn won't be jealous of me any more!"

"Yes, she will," he answered, "more jealous, probably! You'll be such a wonderful grandmother! And I shall be more in love with you than ever!"

"*My son!*" said Katherine in a new and very wonderful voice; but the bubbles reasserted themselves, a whole rainbow series of them this time. "Jack, let's shock the nurses! Let's fairly flabbergast them! Kiss your poor old bed-ridden mother, my son, my darling, darling boy!"

And then, before the scandalized French governesses on the benches, an old man eating out of a paper bag and a harassed nurse trying to keep three children from quarrelling over one skacycle, Jack put his arm around his mother and disappeared under the blue feathers.

The nurse looked after them, while

the largest of the three children kicked the smallest, pushed the other violently, and made off with the ska-cycle, unnoticed. "Well if that ain't the limut! What's the idea?" she said to the old man with the paper bag.

"I should worry," he answered in a husky voice and went on eating stolidly.

LOOK NOT TO ME FOR WISDOM

By Charles Divine

LOOK not to me for wisdom,
There's naught you shall be told;
I make the moon my loving cup
And toast the spilling gold.

Look not to me for wisdom—
The cup is warm above,
And I shall drink of kisses,
So look to me for love.

When love speaks well of wisdom,
Watch out, and guard your heart,
O do not give it wholly,
Or happiness depart.

For love with me is courage,
A vagabond, a road,
Two roving underneath the moon,
And on their hearts no load.

For love with me is madness—
Go to, who would be wise!—
For O she talks of wisdom
With challenge in her eyes.

A MAN'S age commands veneration. A woman's demands tact.

THE man who hesitates is lost; so is the woman who doesn't.

LES CRÊPES

By Henri Allorge

LE bureau de copies de Mme. Lhermitte était fort achalandé. C'est qu'elle travaillait dur, ainsi que ses aides, Mlles. Juliette, Suzanne et Mme. Marthe. On avait l'habitude de ne désigner les dactylographes que par leurs prénoms. Et les clients eux-mêmes suivaient cet usage—oh! en tout bien tout honneur, car, s'il était permis de badiner, il ne fallait pas dépasser certaines limites.

Seul, un jeune préparateur à l'école de pharmacie, M. Gaston Sarrazin, aimait à plaisanter innocemment avec Mme. Lhermitte et ses jolies auxiliaires. Il leur donnait à copier des travaux arides.

— Bah! disait-il, vous n'êtes pas forcées de savoir la chimie, heureusement pour vous!

Et il contait, car il s'était spécialisé dans l'étude des fraudes alimentaires, quelles épouvantables falsifications il constatait chaque jour.

Assez, assez! criait en vain Mme. Lhermitte; vous allez nous couper l'appétit et nous empêcher de diner.

— Eh! eh! ce serait le seul moyen pour vous d'éviter l'ingéniosité des fraudeurs.

Et il partait en riant.

Or, les jours gras approchaient. Pour donner à ses aides surmenées un peu de repos et de distraction, Mme. Lhermitte les invita à venir déjeuner et diner avec elle en famille. On ferait des crêpes.

Ainsi en fut-il décidé. Une pancarte avertit les visiteurs éventuels que le bureau de copies serait fermé l'après-midi.

Après le déjeuner, on s'occupa de confectionner la pâte, qui, savamment composée, devait reposer jusqu'au soir. Une grande soupière fut remplie de la mixture jaunâtre, que la charmante Juliette se mit en devoir de remuer.

Comme elle était dans tout le feu de cet utile travail, un léger coup de sonnette retentit.

— Qui peut venir à cette heure? murmura Mme. Lhermitte. La pancarte indique bien pourtant que le bureau est fermé. Ne répondons pas!

Mais un second coup de sonnette, fort, décidé, autoritaire, se fit entendre. Pour le coup, les dactylographes émues s'enfuirent. Seule, la soupière resta immobile, et pour cause.

Cependant, Mme. Lhermitte interpellait ses employées.

— Juliette, Suzanne, Mme. Marthe! Il faut aller ouvrir! . . . N'y allez pas toutes à la fois!

Aucune ne bougeait, quoique la sonnette carillonnât maintenant sans arrêt.

Enfin, Mme. Marthe, à contre-cœur, se dévoua. Elle ouvrit et M. Gaston entra, souriant.

— Enfin! Ce n'est pas malheureux! s'écria-t-il. J'ai une erreur à corriger sur mon manuscrit; c'est pourquoi je suis venu. Mais vous êtes seule? ajouta-t il.

Mme. Lhermitte, en effet, aussi confuse que ses aides, avait disparu.

Soudain, le chimiste aperçut la majestueuse soupière, trônant sur le bureau.

Oh! oh! fit-il, je crois que vous me faites concurrence.

Des rires fusèrent à travers une porte; puis un minois chiffonné se montra. C'était Juliette. Derrière elle, rentra timidement Suzanne, puis la maîtresse du lieu, toutes trois se tenant les côtes.

— Au premier examen, continua M. Sarrazin, j'inclinerais à croire que ce récipient contient de la terre glaise bien malaxée . . . ou de la colle de pâte coloreé à l'ocre jaune, ou bien encore. . . .

— Oh! fit Mlle. Juliette, scandalisée, en brandissant sa louche, n'avez-vous pas honte de calomnier ainsi la pâte à crêpes, que nous avons si habilement composée!

— Ne croyez pas que ce mélange soit irréprochable! Je vois, à la couleur, que votre farine contient une forte proportion de carbonate de cheux; que votre lait a été fabriqué avec de la cervelle de cheval; que vos œufs même étaient artificiels. Vous savez que plusieurs grandes usines, en Amérique, fabriquent des œufs par millions. . . .

— Voulez-vous bien vous taire! s'écria Mme. Lhermitte.

— Eh! dit Suzanne, pour vous punir, nous mangerons nos crêpes sans vous, et elles seront exquises.

— Oh! je ne tiens pas à m'empoisonner. Grand bien vous fasse! Mais j'allais oublier le but de ma visite.

— Croyez-vous par hasard, demanda Mme. Lhermitte, que nous allons travailler un mardi-gras pour vos beaux yeux?

— Ne dites pas de mal de mes yeux, surtout devant ces demoiselles!

— Oh! dit Juliette, vos yeux nous indiffèrent. Ce n'est pas pour nous qu'ils brillent!

— Qu'en savez-vous? risqua M. Gaston, en envoyant à la jolie copiste une œillade.

Et il avança la main pour pincer le bras nu de Juliette; mais celle-ci, qui avait repris la louche, lui en donna sur les doigts un coup qui les lui englua de pâte.

— Là, dit-elle, comme cela vous en analyserez un échantillon, si vous voulez.

— Vous voilà puni de vos mauvaises paroles, dit Mme. Lhermitte. Quant à votre copie, si vous voulez repasser ce soir, après dîner, peut-être sera-t-elle terminée malgré tout, par faveur toute spéciale.

M. Gaston revint le soir; on le força de goûter aux crêpes, qu'il trouva excellentes.

— Ce n'est pas mauvais, n'est-ce pas, dit Juliette, pour du carbonate de chaux assaisonné de cervelle de cheval et d'ocre jaune?

Mais les crêpes avaient une autre vertu. Quelques mois après, le jeune pharmacien épousa la gentille dactylographe.

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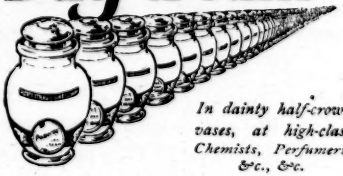

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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Various Hands

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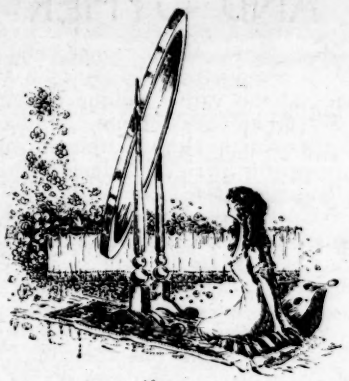

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"Sorry," replied she, "but I've got a committee meeting. Just tell me that recipe of yours for a shampoo once again —sallax, smallax, what's the name of the stuff?"

"Stallax," I replied. "It's best to rub a little olive oil into your scalp before washing your hair. You needn't rinse it afterwards, isn't that a joy? It's just the thing to keep that fair hair of yours the same colour, and to make it look 'like a poet's dream.'"

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"Dear Mrs. ——, you mustn't worry, you really mustn't; if you'll let me be hatefully rude and interfering, I think I can tell you a few ordinary home recipes which will make all the difference to your looks. You've obviously been pretty, but you've lost the freshness and smoothness of your skin, and the thickness and brightness of your hair, two things without which Venus herself would be very plain. You suffer from enlarged pores, too, which cause blackheads. If you went to an American beauty specialist, you would probably be 'skinned,' a painful process which would remove the outer soiled skin and leave the new, clear complexion underneath exposed. The principle of 'skinning' is sound, but there are three objections—the pain and unsightliness of the process, the expense, and the fact that the treatment necessitates one laying up for several weeks. The only safe way to adopt this principle without its unpleasantness, is to obtain some mercolised wax from the chemist's and smear it lightly over the face and neck, washing it off in the morning with warm water. The curious property of this wax is, that it absorbs the soiled particles of the outer skin painlessly and invisibly, leaving the new skin underneath free to breathe. It can be used as often as required, and the cost is trivial. Blackheads are always disfiguring; so, having cured the ones you have, you must prevent others from forming. Blackheads are caused by enlarged pores, and generally form round the mouth and nose, where the pores are always more open. Enlarged pores also cause undue 'shininess' by excessive oily secretion, and they make the skin look coarse. For this purpose stymol is recommended. Dissolve a tablet in water: it will make a lovely effervescent lotion which will loosen any existing blackheads and prevent others from forming by gently closing the enlarged pores. Of course, it also makes a wonderful improvement in the *texture* of your skin.

"Now you need a lotion to protect your complexion and to give it a lovely 'finish.' Powder is absurdly expensive; the cheaper kinds contain many harmful things. If you obtain some cleminite and mix it with water, and apply a little with the finger tips, your skin will keep the delicious 'peach-like' look for hours. If you feel tempted to rouge, my advice is Don't—powdered colliandum looks absolutely natural and doesn't hurt your skin a bit."

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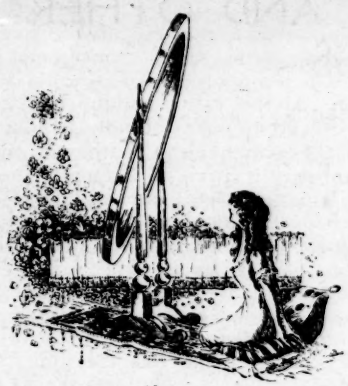

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When answering these Advertisements please mention the Smart Set

zephyr holds in the waist-line. The material that promises to be more than usually popular this summer is cotton georgette. It is so gossamer and dainty in effect, and yet washes to perfection, and can be had in the most lovely colourings.

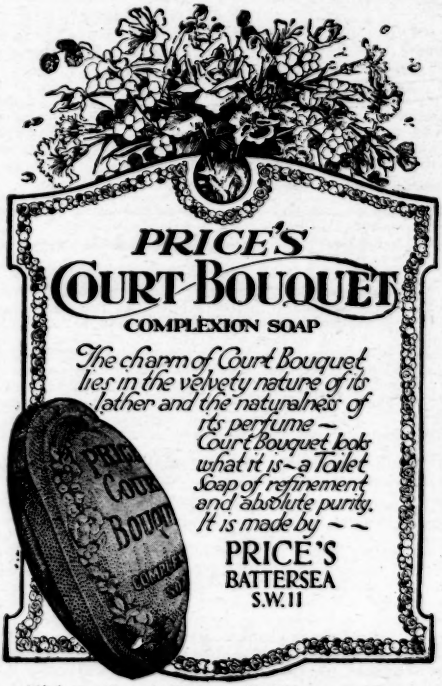
Imagine a long, lazy afternoon in a punt, and a draped frock of picot-edged pale blue cotton georgette. The drapery of the particular model that I should like to describe was arranged in simple classic lines starting in soft folds below the opposite knee, just as one sees it arranged on the statues of ancient Greece, only in this case the same drapery is repeated on the opposite side, one set of folds falling over the other. There was an inner plain picot-edged low-necked bodice and short sleeves, and a girdle of dull gold to complete this very simple but attractive little frock. Into the belt was tucked a little bunch of purple pansies, this colour note being picked up by the ribbon and pansies on the large shady hat and by the deep purple parasol. The shoes and stockings were of pale straw colour.

A funny little conceit that hails from America and has not yet arrived in England is the "Pyjama-Nightie." Hitherto we have had the gossamer nightgown of dainty lace and georgette or lawn, or we have had many variations of the pyjama-suit in silk or crêpe-de-chine, edged with frills and ornamented with bows, but we have not had a real combination of the two. Can you picture a filmy nightgown cut very *décolletée*, minus sleeves, the whole top being one mass of the daintiest lace and muslin imaginable? Follow this downwards till the muslin takes the shape of a divided petticoat, and from the knees downwards another filmy arrangement of lace insertions commence. These are held in at the ankles by a pink or blue ribbon to match the little bows on the shoulders. Surely the harem ladies had some hand in designing this original chemise-de-nuit.

A HINT TO THE WISE

It behoves all who pass in the vicinity of Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square to pay a visit to the Indian Restaurant at 12, Rupert Street, Coventry Street, W.1. Having once been in, one feels tempted to visit it again and again. At this rather unique Restaurant, everything is essentially "Indian," from the management to the uncouth but appetizing curries. No matter how fastidious the taste, one is bound to find, from the many and varied dishes on the menu, something that tickles the palate. Apart from the excellent cuisine, there are many other advantages which one cannot help noticing. The cosy rooms, the courteous and quick service, make one feel quite at home, particularly when one wants to be far from the madding crowd for a few minutes.

The other section of the Restaurant is at 9, Leicester Place, a minute's walk from Leicester Square, and under the same management; the main feature of this latter being the little Indian waiters who are so much missed by the "Sahib Loge" and "Mem Sabs" on their return from the "Land of Regrets."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COURT BOUQUET
COMPLEXION SOAP
The charm of Court Bouquet lies in the velvety nature of its lather and the naturalness of its perfume — Court Bouquet looks what it is — a Toilet Soap of refinement and absolute purity. It is made by — —
PRICE'S
BATTERSEA
S.W.11

Miniature Sample Tablets will be forwarded upon receipt of 2d. for postage.
PRICE'S, BATTERSEA, S.W. 11

DUCO GAITERS FOR MOTOR

THEY INCREASE THE COMFORT OF MOTORING

"Duco" Leaf-Spring Gaiters vastly increase the comfort of riding and driving. Once fitted, they require practically no attention. They are smart and neat in appearance, and actually improve the appearance of the car.

Price from 10/6 each

Write for the new "Duco" Booklet.

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Showrooms: 15, Newman St., W. 1

"DUCO" SPRING GAITERS

maintain a constant film of grease between each leaf of the springs. As a consequence the springs are always clean and supple, and the car glides smoothly over the rough roads.

The grease is kept IN, and the dirt and wet are kept OUT, so that the leaves cannot rust nor clog.

£20 IN MONEY PRIZES are offered each month by the Monthly Magazine, "THE FUTURE," for an ESSAY, and for short translations from FRENCH and GERMAN into ENGLISH and ENGLISH into ESPERANTO. All interested in Foreign Affairs, Art, Commerce, and Education, should read "THE FUTURE"—*vide* Press. Send P.O. 7d. for Specimen No. THE FUTURE (Dept. S.S.), 52, HAYMARKET, S.W. 1.

TYPEWRITER FOR SALE.

AN absolutely new "HAMMOND" Typewriter for Sale. Multiplex, newest model (portable). A bargain.—Write "H," c/o "THE SMART SET" MAGAZINE, 265, Strand, London, W.C. 2.

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YOUR DESTINY.—A scientific investigation into the forces controlling your destiny. Interesting revelations. To know which send full birth-date with 2/6 P.O. A detailed delineation for 5/- and extended for 10/6. Include time and place of birth for these. Each order receives my personal attention.—ROBERT RAYE, 97 Brondesbury Villas, Kilburn, London, N.W.6

"ART OF FASCINATION," best book on the magnetic personality, prolonged youth, etc.; favourably reviewed by "The Queen"; 1s. 8d.—Talisman Book Co., Harrogate. Established 1903.

SIGNORINA BASTINIA gives the original answers of Planchette to questions asked by earnest inquirers. A test question 1/6. Apply by letter only, NORTH HOUSE, BISPHAM, LANCASHIRE.

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SMART GOWNS, Costumes, Furs, etc., at quarter original cost.—The Central Dress Agency, 14, Upper Baker Street (next to Bakerloo Tube).

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WRIGHT'S DETECTIVES. For Private Inquiries and Secret Watchings this Agency stands facile princeps for ability: vide Press; consultations free. T.N., London Wall 8,977. Edgar Wright, Manager, 89 MOORGATE ST. (near Bank of England). West End Branch. 145, Oxford St., W. (T.N., Regent 4,830.)

LITERARY

AUTHORS

desiring prompt placing of their work, or expert advice, should send it to Mr. G. G. MAGNUS, the Expert with 18 years' practical experience in placing MSS., Author of "How to Write Saleable Fiction" (3/6), now in its 10th edition. Book placed with Mr. Melrose two days after receipt. Stamp for terms. CAMBRIDGE LITERARY AGENCY, 8, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. 2.

BOOKS

"SYSTEMS AT RACING AND ROULETTE." A book of absorbing interest to all System lovers, showing how a regular and substantial Income can be earned with small capital. Price 3 penny stamps, SIMPLEX PUBLISHING, 1, New Oxford Street, London, W.C. 1.

A Permanent Youthful Appearance.

Mrs. ADAIR'S

EASTERN MUSCLE OIL

TRADE MARK.

Removes all Lines, Fills out Hollows, Gives and Retains for you a Good, Clear, Healthy and Natural Complexion.

Nearer to the Natural Oil of the Skin than any yet invented.
Reaches the Muscles and Tissues, and is a Youth Restorer.

Original and Unsolicited Testimonials can be seen.

Prices 12/6, 21/6, and 35/6. Small Sample Size, 5/6. Largest Size sufficient for One Year.

Adair Ganesh Establishment, 92, NEW BOND STREET (Oxford St. End.) LONDON, W.
Telephone—GERRARD 3782. Also PARIS and NEW YORK.

MOTORS AND MOTORING

By W. Whittall

THE BUDGET AND THE FUEL TAXES

Whoever else has reason to complain of the Budget proposals, the motorist certainly has cause to congratulate himself. True, the taxes on motor vehicles still remain at their former invidious level, but the sixpenny super-tax on petrol disappears, while the Excise levy on benzole is removed altogether. The position now is that petrol pays sixpence per gallon Excise tax and benzole nothing at all. At the moment of writing I have heard nothing about any fall in the price of petrol consequent upon the abolition of the super-tax, but it certainly cannot be maintained at the present profiteering figure of 3s. 7½d. per gallon, not only because even the petroleum ring cannot have the impudence to continue its exploitation of the public, but by reason of the fact that there is enough benzole being produced now to seriously compete with the imported product. At the present moment benzole is being offered in certain quarters at half a crown per gallon—I am speaking of the days before the Budget. With the sixpence off this means it can even now be retailed at two shillings a gallon, and if the petrol people want to hold their market they will have to reduce their prices to somewhere near the same level. I shall expect to see considerably more enthusiasm manifested in the use of benzole now. It has not been very favourably received up to the present—why I do not know. My own experience of it is that it is just as good a fuel as petrol—even a little better in the matter of power output. In fact, the only objections to be advanced against it are that it is not as easy to get a start with in cold weather, and that the exhaust gases are a little malodorous. The one is only a matter of adjustment, if the car is fitted with a good carburettor such as the Zenith—I have always been able to adjust for easy starting with this type of carburettor—while the other simply has to be tolerated. Personally, if benzole is sold at two shillings a gallon and petrol at 2s. 1d., I shall most certainly be patriotic and use the native product—benzole. It is so easy to be patriotic when it suits the pocket!

AN EXCELLENT SUGGESTION

I have before me a letter from the Motor Legislation Committee, which sets forth the very sound suggestion that instead of the army of "workers" who are being pauperized by the unemployment "dole" being allowed to do nothing but draw their weekly grant, they should be turned on to spring-clean the roads. Splendid! The roads are badly in need of it, and what could be better than that the country should get some of the benefit of the sixty odd millions a year that are being paid out to the "unemployed" for doing absolutely nothing but roll up at the Labour Bureaux to draw their money? Excellent as the idea is in the abstract, I am afraid it stands little chance of adoption. The mere suggestion is enough to make the takers of the dole turn Bolshevist. All the same, the Committee of Enquiry which is being set up by the Minister of Labour might do a lot worse than take it into serious consideration.

THE IMPORTATION OF FOREIGN CARS

At last it is permitted to bring in new cars from abroad. True, the whole of the import restrictions have not been removed, but licenses are to be granted to import cars to the number of 50 per cent. of the 1913 landings in each individual case. After September, it is understood, all restrictions will be removed. I do not anticipate that the relaxation of the prohibition of import will have any adverse effect on British manufacturers, since there is no likelihood that foreign cars will reach the home market in sufficient numbers to seriously affect it. Moreover, to judge by the prices that are being asked for such American and other cars as are already on demonstration here, I should say we have no need to fear their competition. Importers generally, and of American cars in particular, will have to return to earth very quickly unless they want to permanently spoil their market.

N.B.—Questions as to the best type of Motor Cars, etc., will be answered by our Motor Expert on receipt of a stamped and addressed envelope.

Inexpensive Frocks

In Exclusive Designs

We buy all the most exclusive Paris Models, and in copying or adapting them, whilst retaining the line and style, we are able by high organisation in our Workrooms to produce ready-to-wear Frocks at exceptionally moderate prices.

ATTRACTIVE GOWN, as sketch, suitable for afternoon or restaurant wear, in crêpe de chine with coloured spots on white ground. Simple cross-over bodice with collar and cuffs of fine white lawn. Plain, straight hanging skirt with tucks. Most suitable for young ladies.

SPECIAL PRICE

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